Minick, Ruth M.
Central Methodist Church, Mount
Airy, North Carolina

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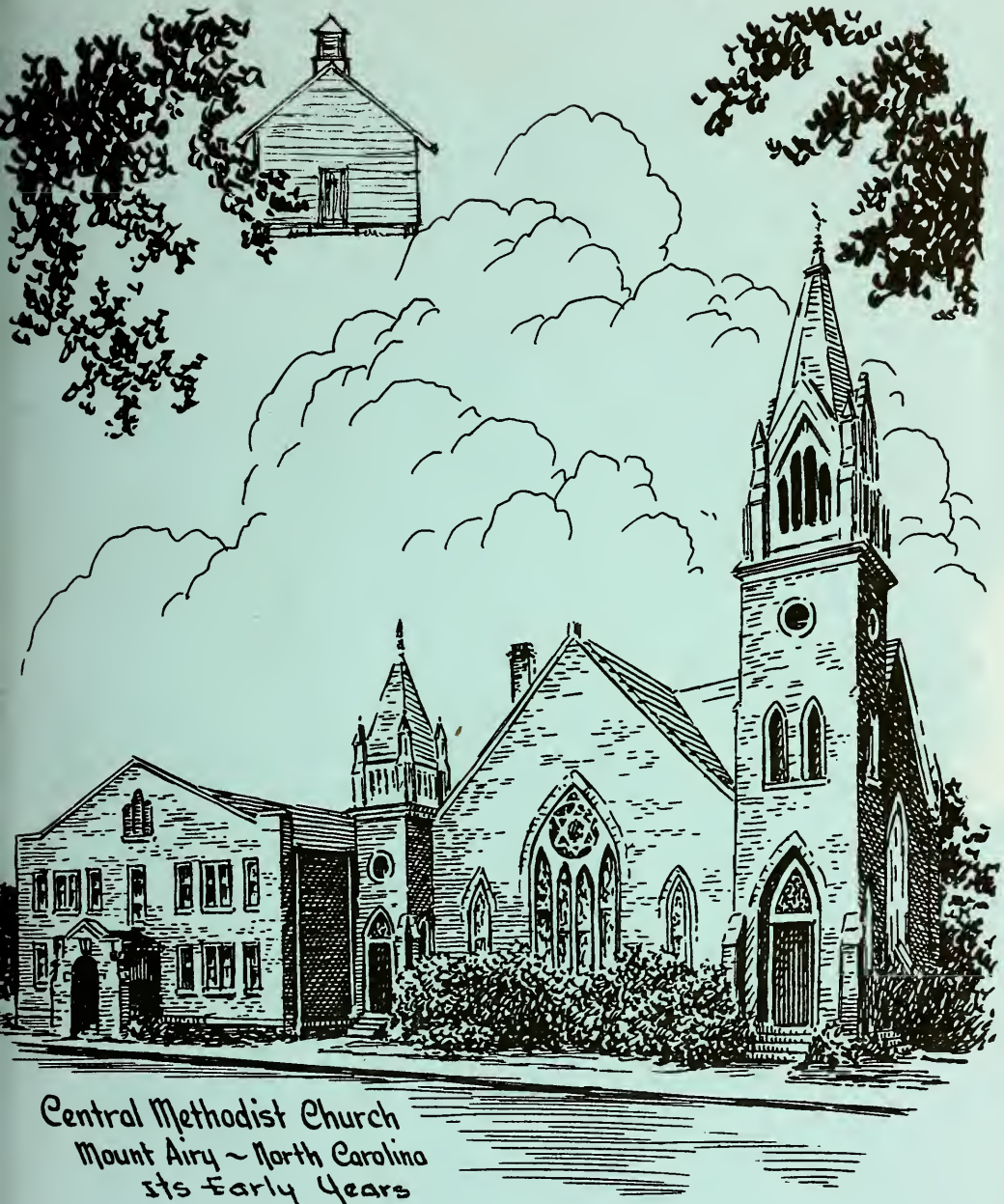

Central Methodist Church
Mount Airy ~ North Carolina
Its Early Years
1879 - 1900

Ruth M. Minick
1975

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FORWORD

This little booklet is put together for the purpose of acquainting our members with some of our own Methodist beginnings in Mount Airy, and to preserve some memories which are fast leaving us.

It began in 1938 when the writer was asked, in desperation, by the then pastor to get together some information on our Central Church for one of the local papers which was to run a series on Mount Airy churches. Two of the then old members of the church, both of whom were born when Old Lebanon was still standing and in use on Lebanon Hill, were interviewed. This statement will serve as the footnote when I quote either in the narrative. Eternal gratitude to Mr. B.F. Sparger and to Mr. J.B. Fulton, both of whom were born in 1853.

This "treatise" is not scholarly; some of it is undoubtedly erroneous--memories are not infallible--and fully authenticated material is rather hard to come by. Some of the late Mr. Leo Shumacker's sources must be still available if one knew where to run them down.

It has been shocking to the writer to realize how soon comparatively recent events and mental pictures are distorted and forgotten. For example, running down such minor items as the species of trees lining the walk and driveway of Old Methodist, how far the gallery extended, how the front appeared, how tall the steeple was, has been nebulous as well as fascinating.

Central Church proper is dealt with in only its very early years--maybe some day somebody will be interviewing you and me for our childhood impressions!

No feelings will be hurt if any reader will correct any of the statements of this writer. There is also a space here and there for that purpose and for any NEW MATERIAL, PLEASE. YOU, YOURSELF, WRITE DOWN, preferably on these pages, YOUR OWN PERSONAL REMINISCENCES. Your children will appreciate them.

If a dedication of such a feeble work is in order I would like to dedicate this little booklet to my parents, John David and Ida Creveling Minick, who, although comparative latecomers (1899) to the church at Mount Airy, none the less gave it their undying love and ever loyal active support. They always did hope that their children would "amount to something" and I hope that this is a needed contribution of mine.

Then, I would like to pay tribute to my uncle and aunt, Clem C. and Anna K. Creveling, latecomers too, who, like my parents, gave Central Church their love and active support, and one of whom baby sat with my cousin and me while my parents and her husband sang to the Lord, literally, in the church choir.

Both my mother and my Uncle Clem, Methodist preacher's children themselves, followed in the tradition of their great-great-grandfather Thomas Bowman, an early Pennsylvania convert of, and ordained preacher by, Francis Asbury, who started it all in the first place. Thomas Bowman also sired a grandson, Bishop Thomas Bowman, who was a telling force in the northern Methodist church in the eighties and nineties.

My father also had his Methodist heritage; his father was a businessman who held a "license to exhort" and who helped organize the first Methodist church in his hometown.

Many thanks to all of those people who gave me information, who proof read my manuscript, who directed me to likely sources, and, in many cases, accompanied me there.

Now, will you please furnish some more of your own in these very pages?

Ruth Minick

CIRCUIT AND STATION APPOINTMENTS OF WHICH MOUNT A IRY WAS A PART -- 1781 ON

From Asbury's Journal by Clark, Potts, Vol I, p. 371. Footnote•

"The Pittsylvania Circuit had been formed in 1776 embracing territory in Virginia and North Carolina. In 1780 the Yadkin Circuit was formed from a part of the Pittsylvania. The Yadkin was west of the New Hope Circuit and extended to the Blue Ridge and southward to the South Carolina line."

So, prior to 1837 when the North Carolina Conference was organized, our section was a part of the Yadkin Circuit which embraced all of western North Carolina west of Guilford. Also, at the very beginning the Yadkin Circuit was part of the Pittsylvania (Virginia) Circuit. Both Pittsylvania and Yadkin were part of the Virginia Conference.

Year	Preacher ("How are the preachers stationed?") Presiding Elder White Col. (Yadkin Circuit. Francis Asbury and Thomas Coke, bishops in charge. Virginia Conf.)		
1781	Andrew Yeargin		
1782	John Cooper, Enoch Matson, George Kimble (George Kimble might have been up this way. See later reference.)		
1783	Henry Ogburn, William Cannon, Lemuel Green		
1784	Philip Bruce, John Baldwin (In 1784 Jesse Lee was traveling with Asbury.)		
1785	Henry Bingham, Thomas Williamson		
1786	Robert J. Miller, John Eason		
1787	W. Partridge, B. M'Henry, J. Conner		
1787	W. Partridge, B. M'Henry, J. Conner	517	20
1788	Sihon Smith, Micaijah Tracy	500	19
1789	Daniel Asbury, John M'Gee (Daniel Asbury at one time, 1793 is the first mentioned, traveled with Asbury. He is said to have preached near Fancy Gap at one time--just when is not clear.)	345	7
1790	William M'Dowell	296	8
1791	Jesse Richardson, Daniel Dean (Daniel Dean also may have preached near Fancy Gap.)	401	25
1792	Geo. M'Kenney, Joseph Moore	439	14
1793	John Fore, John Ahair (Yadkin and Swanino (?)--Union Circuit which took in Lincoln County and territory in South Carolina formed.)		
1794	Christopher S. Mooring, Pemberton Smith (See Christopher Mooring and Peter Doub)	702	12
1795	Henry Hill, Charles Ledbetter (States listed for first time)	505	14
1796	Hezekiah Arnold, Samuel Rudder	645	34
1797	William Moss, Daniel Gossage	434	32
1798	William Moss	434	32
1799	Thomas Wilkerson	459	20
1800	Nathaniel Walker, John Ellis (Salisbury District, Yadkin Circuit (?) Am not sure we were on Yadkin Circuit)	459	20
1801	Daniel Asbury, Wiley Jones (This might have been the year in which Daniel Asbury preached near Fancy Gap.)	409	16
1802	William Ormond (Virginia Conference first listed)	441	16
1803	James Patterson	437	32
1804	John Moore, James Boyd P.E. Alexander McCaine (Asbury's Journal)	437	40
1805	Wm. Algood, John Weaver	405	16
1806	Josiah Philips	459	26
1807	John Owen. After 6 mos. P. Owen	495	24

1808	Joshua W. Kilpatrick, John French (Now Salisbury District, Salisbury Circuit)	512	29
1809	Gray Williams, Thos. Neely	622	33
1810	John Lattimore, Thomas M. Bacon	626	42
1811	Joel Burgess, Nathan Needon	340	50
1812	Thomas Burge	308	49
1813	Robert Gilbraith, S.M. Gividend	335	37

APPOINTMENTS

Year	Preacher	Presiding Elder	White	Col.
1814	Josiah Morton, John C. Owen		331	14
	(It is now Virginia Conference, Yadkin District, Salisbury Circuit.)			
1815	Thomas Mann, Waddill Johnson			
	(Waddill Johnson probably was Mount Airy and vicinity's first circuit rider. See excerpt from Marquis Wood's diary.)			
1816	Bowen Reynolds		749	36
1817	Abraham Trail, Richard B. Carson		670	33
1818	Benjamin Stephens, Charles L. Cooley		731	27
1819	James Reid, Archibald Robinson		705	31
	(James Reid, also spelled Reed, was stationed several times in this vicinity, sometimes as preacher, sometimes as presiding elder. Was father of Numa Reid.)			
1820	Henry Alley		707	29
1821	William Harris		707	29
1822	Thacker Muire		717	6
1823	Jesse Lee		785	24
1824	James Dunahay		1068	77
1825	Robert Wilkerson		1127	80
1826	Christopher Thomas, Benjamin Edge	Peter Doub	1158	87
1827	John C. Ballew, Wm. N. Abingdon	Peter Doub	1363	103
1828	Geo. Stephens, William M. Schoolfield, Geo. Gregory	Peter Doub	1427	114
1829	John H. Watson, Thales M'Donald, Miles Foy (Tradition says that Peter Doub held a camp meeting at Laurel Bluff. It was in this year that Peter Doub wrote in his diary, "Bro. M. Foy is but a boy." And was it under Peter Doub that the churches of Lebanon, Mount Hermon and Siloam were organized? The increase in membership is impressive and it was about that time when the first three churches mentioned were organized.)	Peter Doub	1538	112
1830	Benjamin Kidd	Moses Brock	1600	110
1831	S.D. Tompkins	Moses Brock	868	69
1832	C.P. Mooreman	Moses Brock	459	57
	(Virginia Conference, Yadkin District, Surry Circuit)			
1833	J.W. Childs	Henry D. Wood	615?	55
1834	Thomas Barnum	John W. Childs	558	28
1835	H.H. Tippett		624	36
1836	H.H. Tippett		658	50
	(L. Shumacker states that Henry Tippett held a meeting at the older Brower Springs camp ground, which was 5 miles west of Mount Airy on Route 103. Don't know when. See later notes.)			

1837--

Note: If the year 1837 the North Carolina Conference was organized. Not until 1838 were the first Conference Minutes of the North Carolina Conference published. Then Yadkin County had not yet been taken from Surry (1850) and we were part of the Salisbury District with the exception of the year 1848 when we were listed as part of the Danville District--don't know why. Up until 1867 we were listed as the Surry Charge which took in a lot of territory--Surry and Yadkin up until 1850.

The year of appointments are also confusing. The diary of Marquis Lafayette Wood (in Duke University library) begins in 1858 so the appointments must have been for the year following. Wood's diary, for which he uses a different book for each year, shows that he was stationed at another charge, in 1857 the year for which he was listed in the Minutes.

1837	Thomas M. Sharp	James Reed	703	48
	(Here is James Reed again.)			
1838	Miles Foy	James Reed	554	24
1839	Miles Foy	James Reed	553	23
	(Miles Foy was our first well-known preacher. He preached at Lebanon, Main Street Church, and was present at the corner-stone laying at Central.)			
1840	John H. McIntosh	Peter Doub	561	17
1841	William Turner	Peter Doub	565	25
1842	William Turner	Peter Doub	626	30
1843	John B. Corn	Peter Doub	375	37
	(Is this when Peter Doub requested to be sent back on the circuit so that he could "study more"? Was this the time of the camp meetings?)			
1844	William S. Colson	Joseph Goodman	390	33
1845	A. Owen	J. Goodman	375	30
1846	Solomon Helsabeck	Sydney Bumpass	353	23
1847	D.H. Davis	Sidney D. Bumpass	350	24
1848	James L. Fisher	William Carter	500	25
1849	J.M. Fulton	William Carter	385	13
1850	John M. Gunn	William Carter	438	10
	(Here we have the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. The Civil War is brewing. Also, Yadkin is separated from Surry.)			
1851	J.M. Gunn	William Barringer	396	3
1852	Andrew J. Tomline	William Carter	300	9
1853	William Harris	Peter Doub	371	12
1854	John M. Gunn	Nathan H.D. Wilson	433	25
1855	J.C. Thomas	William Barringer	533	20
1856	Simeon D. Peeler	William Barringer	366	0
1857	Marquis L. Wood	Numa F. Reid	326	23
1858	Marquis L. Wood	Numa F. Reid	363	28
	(Good old Marquis Wood. He kept a diary!* On Mon. Mar. 8, 1858 he writes: "Spent the day principally talking about building a church in Mount Airy. Finally a while before night we succeeded in making a start in raising the money....." Marquis was stationed on a circuit--Lebanon (which was considered "out in the country"), Mount Herman, Siloam,			

*Wood's diary is in the manuscript room in the library of Duke University. There is a notebook for each year.

Dobson, etc.)

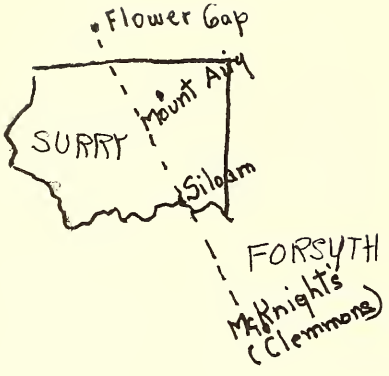
In that year too, Mr. Wood conducted the funeral of "Ellen Victoria Allred, deceased, little daughter of Murphy Allred." Little Ellen is buried in the Old Methodist church yard which might make her the first, or among the first, buried there. There is a discrepency in the death date of Wood's dairy and the tombstone. Probably the tombstone was erected later--there were many children in those days.

Here is first mentioned the Blue Ridge Mission which is credited to Father Needham, a supply preacher. Salem Church was organized here. The appointment is "to be supplied".--probably by Father Needham or Jesse Roberts, another supply preacher.

1859	Isaac W. Avent	William H. Bobbitt	368	26
1860	James T. Smoot	William H. Bobbitt	399	1
1861	(No report. The Civil War begins.)			
1862	William A. Smith	G.T. Wyche		
1863	(to be supplied)			
1864	(to be supplied)	G.T. Wyche		
1865	(No minutes received.)			
	The Civil War ends.			
1866	R.T.H. Stevenshon	William Closs	390	15
1867	Marquis L. Wood	William Closs	410	45
	(This is the first time that the name "Mount Airy Station" appears. It is now Mount Airy Station.)			
1868	(No minutes received)			
1869	Marquis L. Wood	H.J. Hutson		
1870	S.D. Peeler	M.L. Wood	269	1
1871	J.F. Heitman	M.L. Wood	205	3
	(This is the last time the colored people are counted.)			
1872	J.F. Heitman	M.L. Wood	228	
1873	S.M. Davis	M.L. Wood	241	
1874	S.M. Davis	D.R. Bruton	258	
1875	S.M. Davis	D.R. Bruton	270	
1876	James Willson	D.R. Bruton	274	
1877	James Willson	D.R. Bruton	304	

Year	Preacher	Presiding Elder	White Col.
1878	James Willson	R.G. Barrett	320
1879	James Willson	R.G. Barrett	331
1880	N.E. Coltraine	R.G. Barrett	320
1881	G.W. Callahan	R.G. Barrett	331
1882	G.W. Callahan - James Willson	L.L. Hendren	345
1883	M.H. Moore	L.L. Hendren	375
1884	M.H. Moore	L.L. Hendren	357
1885	W.H. Townsend	R.A. Willis	360
1886	J.B. Hurley	R.A. Willis	164
1887	J.B. Hurley	B.R. Hall	211
	(There is now a "Mount Airy District". Under the pastorate of Rev. Hurley, according to the late Mr. B.F. Sparger, the first Woman's Missionary Society in Mount Airy was organized.)		
1888	G.F. Smith	B.R. Hall	234
1889	J.E. Gay	R.M. Hoyle	225
1890	J.E. Gay	R.M. Hoyle	292
1891	J.E. Gay	R.M. Hoyle	343
1892	H.M. Blair	R.M. Hoyle	380
1893	H.M. Blair	W.R. Barnett	412
	(Mr. Blair begins to talk up a new church.)		
1894	A.P. Tyer	W.R. Barnett	412
	(The cornerstone for Central is laid, and some people are disgruntled.)		
1895	W.R. Barnett	H.M. Blair	384
1896	W.R. Barnett	H.M. Blair	388
1897	H.K. Boyer	H.M. Blair	365
1898	H.K. Boyer	H.M. Blair	382
1899	H.K. Boyer	J.J. Wrenn	324
1900	Z. Paris	J.J. Wrenn	350

These minutes were taken from the copies at Junaluska. They have not been double checked.



"LIVE OR DIE, I MUST RIDE."

FRANCIS ASBURY
August 20, 1745 - March 31, 1816

Ride he did, Bishop Francis Asbury, the "First Circuit Rider", the "Prophet of the Long Road", the "Founder of American Methodism"--by chaise and horseback, over Indian and deer trails, good roads and bad, hills and hollows, mountains and plains. Over a period of forty-five years, from 1771 to 1816, Bishop Asbury covered 265,000 miles. He saw Methodism grow from six preachers and 600 members to 700 preachers and 200,000 members. And this he accomplished by asking nothing of his preachers which he would not ask of himself; and by his unshakable belief in the system of itineracy.

And ride Bishop Asbury did through our own Flower Gap in the years 1788, 1790, and 1792.

Bishop Asbury was a missionary sent out from England to the colonies by John Wesley, the founder of Methodism. Asbury, a man of the common people, understood the rough ways of the pioneers in the New World whereas Wesley, a brilliant man of letters, antagonized them. Asbury was able to keep the friendship of the American colonists at the time of the American Revolution when Britishers were not exactly welcomed, even in the face of an inflamatory letter to the colonies by John Wesley.

Wesley died an Anglican in England; Asbury died a Methodist in Virginia.

FRANCIS ASBURY (continued)

On Asbury's journeys up and down the Atlantic seacoast and into the new lands beyond the Appalachians, Asbury rode, sometimes alone, sometimes with one or [1] more of his preachers--those early circuit riders. Luckily, Asbury kept a Journal.* It is not always possible to follow the exact route of Asbury in his journeys, but one can almost pinpoint them--even in some instances locate the primitive houses in which he spent the night--if he was lucky enough to find a house.

Asbury organized the Holston Conference which was comprised of southwest Virginia and northeast Tennessee. Down near Clemmons, North Carolina, in what is now Forsyth County, lived a man named McKnight at whose house the first conferences of this section were held. On Asbury's travels from a church on Bridle [2] Creek near Independence, Virginia to McKnight's at Clemmons* Asbury traveled by way of Flower Gap and perhaps by way of Elk Spur. [3]

Flower Gap is not Low Gap as has been erronously thought.* It is a gap--little more than a trail now as it was in Asbury's time--just on the east side of Sugar Loaf Mountain in Carroll County, Virginia--a gap between Piper's Gap and Fancy Gap. Flower Gap Primitive Baptist Church, founded 1841, faces Flower Gap as it sits on the road which connects Cana, Virginia and Piper's Gap. It is logical to deduce that Asbury left his church on Bridle Creek, crossed Flower Gap, followed a branch of Stewart's (Stuart's) Creek as it ran into the Ararat, down the Ararat through Siloam, N.C. where the Ararat runs into the Yadkin and where a strong tradition of Asbury's visit persists, on down the Yadkin to Clemmons to McKnight's. This route from Flower Gap to Clemmons is almost "as the crow flies."

Elk Spur is little more than a trail just east of Fancy Gap.

1

* "The Journal and Letters of Francis Asbury" edited by Clark, Potts, and Payton. Abingdon Press, Nashville, Tenn. 1958

2

* The location of McKnight's home and chapel has never been exactly ascertained. McKnight is buried in the churchyard of Sharon Methodist Church near Lewisville, N.C. (Forsyth County). His old crude tombstone has been lovingly encased in a more substantial one. The inscription reads: "In memory of George McKnight Senu (Senior) born July 8, 1765. Departed this life March 22, 1847. He lived 81 years, 8 months and 14 days. In youth he joined the Method (Methodists) then maryed got sofkt (sophisticated) joined the Morafen (Moravians) then moved to Stoks had preaching in his aon house".

3

* Footnotes. Clark, etc. "Journal and Letters"

On one of these trips, in 1790, Asbury had with him a preacher named Whatcoat; on another, in 1788, a preached named Ware. Both Ware's and Asbury's accounts are given below. Ware is undoubtedly in error as to the year 1789 because during
1
that year Asbury did not come through Flower Gap.* He came to the conference from South Carolina. There "our brethren from the westward met us as we had weighty matters to consider." Asbury's 1788 account coincides with Ware's description. Memories are fallible as this writer has greviously learned in the preparation of this paper. The following account is taken from "Life and Travels of Rev. Thomas Ware by Himself". Published 1840.

"In the spring of 1789 "(1788)" Bishop Asbury visited my circuit and took me with him to North Carolina. From New River to the Flower Gap, a distance not exactly remembered, we gradually ascended til we reached the summit of the Blue Ridge, on the border of North Carolina. When we arrived here, I was enchanted, and should have spent hours in surveying the scene below, had I been alone; but it was all familiar to Bishop Asbury, who immediately dismounted and began to descend the mountain. I, of course, must follow him, which I did with a sublimity of feeling that I cannot describe. From this lofty eminence you see the world spread out below you, extended in one continued grove, excepting here and there a spot, until vision is lost in the blue expanse which limits its powers." (Asbury was in Tennessee at the date below, so Ware is in error here too.)

"Our conference was held this year at McKnight's church, commencing on the 11th of April. It was one of the most interesting conferences I had attended. Great, great grace rested on both preachers and people, and much good resulted. There was much tender solicitude felt and expressed on account of Mr. Wesley...."

Here is Asbury's account of the same trip through Flower Gap.

"Sunday, May 18, 1788. Rode to a chapel near New River, where I preached on 'How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet', etc. After eating a morsel, we hasted on our way to Gideon Farris's. A twenty miles' ride through the mountains brought us to our lodgings for the night at Francis Kincannon's near the Flower Gap." (Footnote from Clark: Enroute to North Carolina Asbury seems to have followed a southeastern course along the south fork of the Holston, where Isaac Smith lived, from Aspenville to Flower Gap.....The 'chapel near New River" was probably on Bridle Creek. He probably 'ate his morsel' with Enoch Osborne who lived on Bridle Creek, and in whose home Asbury stayed on later occasions.)

1

* The writer came to this conclusion independently, as it happened. Then, upon further followup, it was found that Clark, etc. had come to the same conclusion. The footnote is from "Journal", Vol. I, p. 595: "This Conference included the Holston preachers. Thomas Ware says that Asbury passed through his New River Circuit and that he accompanied the bishop by way of the Flower Gap...but since Asbury came from South Carolina this is an obvious error. Asbury came through Holston in 1788."

Now for 1790----[1]*

"Monday, May 31, 1790. Rode to New River." (Footnote: (Clark, etc.) According to Whatcoat, they stayed at Michael Lee's on New River and passed through Flower Gap to North Carolina)...."forty-five or fifty miles; here I saw John Tunnell, very low.

"Tuesday, June 1, 1790. I rode about forty-five miles to Armstrong's and next day about four o'clock reached McKnight's on the Yadkin River, in North Carolina. (Footnote: Asbury and Whatcoat rode up Cripple Creek to Armstrong's[2]* near the Flower Gap. George McKnight lived a mile and half west of Clemmonsville, the present Clemmons in Yadkin, now Forsyth County, near the Yadkin River.)

Now in 1792---

"Wednesday, March 21, 1792. We started for Holston." (Footnote: The party started from the Yadkin in North Carolina to the Holston country by the way of the Flower Gap...) After riding about fifteen miles, we stopped for food, and a woman directed us alone the new way over the Elk Spur."

The above is interesting. Asbury just might have taken the woman's advice and gone over the Elk Spur.[3]* Asbury goes on to say: "We found ourselves in a wilderness. The weather was very cold and the night coming on. We were at a loss what to do. Whilst we were wishfully looking about us, to our great satisfaction we discovered a house. It was clean and comfortable, and we were well entertained."

Asbury in his journeys had some rather hair-raising experiences. Sometimes he was lost; sometimes he heard the howling of wolves; he encountered fierce storms; he did not always have a place to sleep; sometimes he did not have food for his horse; sometimes he slept in one-roomed cabins with the large families and the vermin. But sometimes he did have comfortable quarters; several times he slept in the Salem Tavern in Winston-Salem. But neither deprivation nor comfort deterred him from the arduous work in the furthering of Methodism.

---

[1] * Asbury's writings and footnotes are taken from Clark's, etc. "Journal.."

[2] * Asbury most likely went down Paul's Creek, a tributary of Stuart's, along which were granted lands to James, Hugh and William Armstrong in 1781, 1783 and 1784, respectively. Asbury must have stayed in the house of one of these men.

[3] * To reach the Elk Spur, one takes the Bear Trail Road just on the west side of Orchard Gap and Ward's Gap in Carroll County. He turns off to the right at the Crooked Oak Moravian Church and follows a narrow road up the mountain. (See later record from the Moravians.)

EARLY CIRCUIT RIDERS

Bishop Asbury did not organize Lebanon Church, Mount Airy's first Methodist Church--he couldn't have; he had been dead for at least ten years--but he undoubtedly spawned a breed of circuit riders, some of whom must have brought their enthusiasm up this way.

At the time of Asbury's travels through this section, Mount Airy and vicinity was known as "The Hollows"--the "hollows" between the Blue Ridge and the "ridges", (Chestnut Ridge, Slate Mountain, etc.) Although there was a small settlement here it was a section visited mainly by hunters, a region of scattered cabins. Probably no early circuit rider visited this section until the early 1800's. Two, Isaac Rollins and George Kimball, were credited by two local sources to have been up this way but the writer has been unable to find any documented proof.

Isaac Rollins was the first preacher in charge of the Pittsylvania (Virginia) Circuit of which we were a part, it is true. However, the region of this circuit was so vast and our part of it so "undeveloped" that no circuit rider, no matter how dedicated and industrious, could have covered it thoroughly. And Isaac Rollins was neither dedicated nor industrious. He was just plain sorry. He died in 1783; and if one wants Bishop Asbury's opinion of Isaac Rollins, he just has to read Asbury's entry of August 5, 1783.*[1]

The other early preacher, according to the late Leo Shumaker* was a Rev. George Kimble.[2] But other than having been assigned to this circuit in 1782 when the region was unsettled the writer has been able to find no proof that he visited in our immediate vicinity.

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[1] * Clark. Journal, Vol. I p. 444

[2] * Liberty is taken from quoting a newspaper article on local churches written for the Mount Airy Times by the late Leo Shumaker. This writer wrote to Mr. Shumaker for the source of some of his information but received no reply. I surmise that much of it is tradition gathered from local people. But some of it is erroneous, people's memories being what they are. To date the writer has not been able to authenticate any of this material, although, in a case or two, evidence points that way.

CIRCUIT RIDERS (continued)

The nicest unexpected gem of information comes from Marquis Wood in his diary of Feb. 3, 1858:

[1]

"Sunday, 7.....Met up with old Bro. Hicks* who I saw at a camp meeting on the Blue Ridge Mission in 1856. Bro. Hicks is a local preacher on the Surry Circuit. He told me that he was converted under the preaching of Waddill Johnson, the first Methodist preacher that came through this country. He said that he had often heard of the Methodist preachers, and had always heard them represented as false prophets. But when they came in reach he was determined to go to hear them and accordingly when Rev. Johnson preached in some five or six miles of him he was present, and under conviction, before going to hear him, and had the horrors of hell so depicted and the beauties of heaven so portrayed that he could hold out no longer and fell as a dead man thinking he was going to die. After passing a few days between hope and fear while lying upon his bed of rest, meditating upon his condition, and the mercy of God, the Lord caused gladness to fill his soul and joy to spring up in his heart."

Mr. Wood says that then Brother Hicks was licensed to preach. And if Brother Hicks was an old man in 1858, he must have been converted in the early 1800's. His description sounds like those given in those days. So, Waddill Johnson might well have been our first Methodist preacher. And, indeed, in the list of assigned preachers to the Salisbury Circuit of which we were a part, Waddill Johnson was a 1815 appointtee.

Now to Peter Doub, James Needham, Miles Foy, Marquis Lafayette Wood and some others of our early circuit riders to whom we owe so much.

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* Did he once preach in the vicinity of Flat Rock?

PETER DOUB
March 12, 1796 - August 24, 1869

Peter Doub was born in what is now Forsyth County in 1796. His parents, Eve and John, were of German origin and belonged to the Dutch Reformed Church. They were converted to Methodism by Andrew Yeargin who was the first assigned preacher of the Yadkin Circuit. John became a local preacher and he and Eve organized a church of six to eight members in their home.

At a camp meeting in 1802, John and Eve's youngest son, Peter, was "awakened"; in 1817 he was "converted" and licensed to preach. Upon occasion when Peter was criticized for preaching too short sermons (!!!!!!!) he replied that he had told all he knew and did not want to repeat himself. A fellow preacher, Christopher S. Mooring, then told him to "read more, study more, and pray more and you will be able to preach more." This Peter must have taken to heart because we are told thiat his longest sermon was four hours and fifteen minutes!

Then, being earnest and striving to please, we are told from Fitzgerald's "Cameos" (Southern Methodist, 1885): "His presiding elder, John Early (afterwards bishop), took him in hand. 'Doub, you have sense and you know how to preach', said he, 'but your sermons are too long, you wear the people out. You are like a man looking up a river, who turns as if to fish in every little creek or branch that runs into the main stream. Keep to the main channel. You need not tell all you know in one sermon. (Doub) 'I had a way', he says' when I came to a place in preaching where there was a temptation to turn aside, of mentally whispering to myself, ' "There must be fish up that stream but I must not go after them" '

Peter was stationed in the Yadkin District (from Orange to Patrick west) in 1826-1829. He afterwards declared that these years were the happiest of his life. In four years he conducted 50 camp meetings, 144 quarterly conferences. During the four years, 2,738 persons were converted at meetings he held in person; 7000 were converted in the district.

Tradition has it that one of these camp meetings was held at the crossroads at Toast. If so, Peter must have had a big hand in the growth and establishment of Methodism in Surry County.

Peter was a man of imposing presence and booming voice. He became just about

the most prominent preacher of North Carolina and was awarded the Doctor of Divinity degree from Trinity College where he taught for a time.

In 1869 Peter Doub died. Perhaps the following account characterizes him: "Tell my brethren of the Conference", said he to Dr. Fletcher Reid the day before he died, "that if I am alive, I am working my way to the skies; if I am dead, I am alive."

Some of Peter's kinfolk in Forsyth County near Pfafftown have lovingly restored the old Doub cemetery there. Peter, though, is buried in Greensboro.

(From a handwritten manuscript written by A.H. Merritt for his Pittsboro (N.C.) Sunday School Class. Mr. Merritt gave some pithy observations which are interesting.) This manuscript is at Junaluska.

PETER DOUB

"For more than half a century Peter Doub was an important factor in Methodism in North Carolina. He was born in what is now Forsyth County, and was the youngest of nine children. His father was a German, his mother a Swiss. He was converted and joined the church in 1817, and entered the Conference at Norfolk in 1818, and Wood is responsible for the declaration that 'when he joined the conference he had never seen an English grammar."

"In his youth he was extremely timid. He thought the first effort at preaching a most dismal failure. He was terribly humiliated, passed a miserable night and but for the encouragement of the Rev. Mr. Cannon he would have given up preaching and returned to his farm."

.....

"Dr. Doub had a large and muscular frame and was a man of imposing presence. His mind was capacious and his memory retentive. He read a great deal, never forgot what he read, and it was always at his command. He became a very learned theologian and was a master of polomic theology, and delighted in doctrinal discourses. Seven times he was a member of the general conference, but he never took an active part in the proceedings; and so at the annual state conferences was always silent and quiet, and rarely expressed an opinion. In fact he was no organizer, no leader of the thought and action of men. The pulpit was his forte.

Dr. Doub sometimes attempted wit and humor, but in this he was a failure. He had an unseemly habit of throwing his head back and drawing in a long breath and letting it out with a puff when he said anything he considered 'smart.' For example: He had given an exortation to men guilty of certain crimes, when he suddenly turned to an auditor and exclaimed, 'Now didn't I riddle them, Brother Riddle.' Then followed an audible inspiration and expiration.

"While sitting at meal in the house of Mr. Aaron Hendren he turned to a girl at his side and said, 'Honey, will you pass me the honey?' Then came the tilt of his chair, the sniff and explosion as much as to say, 'That is smart.' The drollery and not the wit made it amusing. But this is but a speck on a great luminary and not worthy to be mentioned in the midst of so many qualities that were great and good.

'He peacefully 'fell on sleep' at Greensboro on the 24th of August 1869---His dying message to his companion in the gospel was 'Tell the brethren of the Conference, if I am living I am working my way to the skies; if I am dead, I am living.' "

JAMES NEEDHAM

James Needham was a supply preacher; he never joined the Conference. One of the windows in old Central Methodist Church was dedicated to him and read: "In memory of James Needham, seventy-eight and a half years in the ministry." The inscription on the adjoining panel originally read: "James Needham, 1799-1899".

James Needham, circuit rider, supply preacher, was a preacher "extraordinaire." Probably no minister in North Carolina was more remarkable or more widely beloved. When he died in 1899, just 55 days short of his one hundredth birthday, a flood of newspaper articles and a series of pamphets appeared praising his character and lamenting his passing.

James Needham was born in Randolph County May 26, 1799 of devout Methodist parents. When he was four or five his parents started out for Ohio but, because of illness, were detained at a home near the Laurel Bluff Cotton Mills and there stayed for several years before they moved back to Randolph County. There James Needham was converted--and he always emphasized that he was "converted"--in September 1820. In 1842 he moved near Pilot Mountain in Surry County.

Father Needham, as he was affectionally known, served the Methodist churches of this section as supply preacher until his death on April 1, 1899. His sermons were characterized by their earnestness. "His language was pure and he made no strange performances in the pulpit.[1]* His prayers became miracles; he prayed for sick people and they got well; he prayed for the grief stricken and they became joyful; he prayed for rain and it rained. At the age of 98 he attracted statewide attention when he assisted Rev. H.K. Boyer and his own pastor and co-worker, Rev. J.P. Rodgers, in a revival at Central Church. At the age of 99 he preached to a congregation of 1500 to 2000 at the annual Conference in Winston.

On April 1, 1899, just three weeks after his last sermon, Father Needham died of "la grippe" ('flu) and was buried at New Hope Church near Ararat, N.C.

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* Almost all the facts herein are taken from a pamphlet written by Rev. J.P. Rodgers, "Life of Rev. James Needham." Surry Printing House. Pilot Mountain, 1899.

JAMES NEEDHAM

Excerpts: Pamphlet. "Life of Rev. James Needham" by Rev. J.P. Rodgers. Surry Printing House. Pilot Mountain, 1899.

(Rev. Rodgers "labored together" with Father Needham and put down what he remembered Father Needham's having told him.)

"Born in Randolph County May 26, 1799...books scarce and schools few and inferior...read history and standard works on theology, but most of all the Word of God, the first book he ever purchased.

"Faithful local preacher who began at conversion in September 1820 and continued without interruption until he delivered his last powerful message Mar. 12, 1899, a few days before his death." (Preached 50 minutes--"astonished at the volume of his voice".)

"In the fall of 1820...he attended a camp meeting at Pleasant Garden, Guilford Co...Was 'powerfully' converted...He returned home and in reply to the question, 'What's the news?' he said, 'Good news! Good News! I've got religion!' His friends began to cry and leave the house. He called them back and told them he wanted to pray for them. At once he joined the Methodist Church, the church of his pious parents."

Licensed to exhort some time in the year 1821.

"Always had an unshaken faith in his conversion...preeminently a Christian formed in the Methodist mold...shunned controversies but defended them when it became necessary to defend the doctrine of the church.

"Could recite Bible when in old age his eyes gave out...Was not eloquent in the sense that the word is usually understood. At times some of his words were not even heard distinctly. But he 'had the power to move people.'

JAMES NEEDHAM (continued)

"He was not acquainted with many of the plans and schemes operated by some of the latter day revivalists, but powerful religions awakenings occurred in the charges he served...He never fell in with the modern method of relating anecdotes and persisted in saying that this is not preaching the gospel. His language was pure and he made no strange performances in the pulpit. In his revival he resorted to no questionable methods to gain attention and draw large crowds.

"Often did two services a day. Nearly a hundred years old and attending and laboring in the night services of meetings week after week!

....Some leading camp grounds of years ago were established by him. On different occasions in these meetings where he labored, the interest became so great that half the night would pass away before the multitudes would retire to their tents.

Father Needham organized the Blue Ridge Mission and served it three years. He labored two years on Fisher's River Mission which was joined to the Blue Ridge Mission. Later he spent two years on this work. He served Patrick and Sauratown Mission when it extended to the Chowan District. He traveled one year on each of the following charges: Stokes, Forsyth, Surry, Yadkin, Surry Circuit which had twenty-eight appointments. He traveled the Sauratown and Pilot Mountain Mission during the war.

Instrumental in forming the society at Jamestown...also at Muir's Chapel...he organized a church. This might be said of many churches in Surry, Stokes, Forsyth, Yadkin, and other counties; here his labors preceded revivals and where revivals preceded the organization of churches."

Organized a Library Association at Ebenezer Church about seven miles from the place where Trinity College was afterwards located. He framed the Constitution and By-laws of this Society. Laid the foundation of Trinity College.

"He preached expecting results."

EXCERPTS FROM "LIFE OF JAMES NEEDHAM"--RODGERS

"In his early life, Father Needham went to his church early one Sabbath. He took a seat on a root under a large tree. No one else had come, and it was entirely still about him. Suddenly a voice said to him, 'Get up from there'. Startled, he quickly arose. He looked all around for the speaker, but saw no one. Then he cast his eyes up the tree. At that moment a large limb broke off and fell upon the very spot where he had sat.*[1]

"Surely God never bowed his ear lower to hear the prayer of any of earth's saints than he did to hear Father Needham's. He prayed for mourners and they ceased to mourn, were comforted and praised God. He prayed for the sick and suffering and their diseases were stayed and their health was speedily restored. He prayed for rain, with a sky as clear and rainless as that above Elijah on Carmel, and in an hour the thirsty earth was drinking the descending rain. He prayed with and for his family evening and morning and they all became Christians in answer to his prayers.

"His son Jesse was very sick with fever. The doctor had given up the case. He became very disturbed about his call to preach. He thought he was going to die and was alarmed about the condition of his soul. He asked his father to pray for him. After a most earnest and powerful prayer, hope revived and he began at once to recover and rapidly improved from that hour.

"A granddaughter's husband, Rev. Jesse Ashburn of the Primitive Baptist Church, was very sick and his skilled physician said that patients in his condition always died. He sent for Father Needham and three ministers. Prayer was offered that night. Before day the suffering man called up the preachers to pray for him. While they were on their knees the pains left him. He got up that morning, ate his breakfast and walked about to the surprise of his physician and others.

"In 1881 a meeting to pray for rain was appointed at New Hope Church. After the opening services, Father Needham made some remarks. At this time in the service some of the doubters looked about for signs of rain, but saw none. He called the congregation to prayer and asked all to kneel. No prayer in a long life of prayer was offered in greater earnestness. Before the congregation arose from its knees, it thundered. He arose and told the people to hurry to their homes, or they would be caught in the rain. A good rain came and some were not yet at their homes when it began to fall.*[2]

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[1] * This tree is said to be still standing in the front yard of New Hope Methodist Church at Ararat, N.C.

[2] * This incident is well known in Surry County. The story also goes that as Father Needham started home, somebody called him to hurry that he would get wet. Father Needham replied, "I prayed for the rain; now I will take it!"

JAMES NEEDHAM (continued)

"During the month of February, 1898, he and his pastor assisted Rev. H.K. Boyer, the pastor of Mt. Airy Station, in revival services. The Mt. Airy correspondent to the Wilmington Star writes: 'Rev. James Needham, of Surry County, a local minister of the Methodist Church, preached a great sermon from Acts 17:30 to a large congregation in Central Methodist Church here today. Brother Needham will be 99 years old on May 26th, and has been a minister of the gospel for more than seventy-five years, having preached to five generations. He is one of the most remarkable men in this country. Physically he is quite active for one of his age, and his mental faculties are clear and vigorous. He is here attending a revival meeting, and is loved and honored by every one he knows. He is indeed a father in Israel, and in listening to him one almost imagines that he is hearing a voice from the great beyond."

(At the end of the pamphlet are short tributes from Solomon Helsabeck, J.T. Lowry (Mt. Airy editor), W.S. Creasy, H.M. Blair, and others.)

MILES FOY
May 21, 1811 - March 10, 1895

A dedicatory window in the old Central Methodist Church, Mount Airy, N.C. read: "Miles Foy, 60 years an ambassador for Christ. Born May 21, 1811. Died March 10, 1895." Thus Rev. Miles Foy was twelve years younger than Father Needham.

Miles Foy had the distinction of meeting with the great Peter Doub. Peter was a good preacher but he certainly was not much of a fact giver in his diary--if you could call it such.[1]* But he once made this notation: the punctuation is Peter's. The time is 1829 but Peter, as usual, does not state where. It could have been near here since we were part of the Salisbury Circuit.

"On Salisbury Circuit there were 3 camp meetings at the 1st there were 33. the 2.70 and at the 3.75 converts. Bro. M. Foy is but a boy."

Brother Miles Foy for sure was but a boy when he joined the conference in 1829. He was licensed to preach the same year in which Peter Doub made his observation. Here he tells it in his own way:

"The 1st of Jan. 1829 I was licensed to preach by the Quarterly Conference the Trent Circuit so called Jones. I was 1st to reflect upon the subject of the work of grace. What would have been my condition without it and how responsible I should be of entering into the sacred ministry when I saw that it was an absorbing subject for life. I left my father's house with a heart full of sorrow at parting with my kindred and home, but with a firm conviction that it was my duty to go. I felt cheered with the prospect that at so early an age as 17 I might become a useful man and persuade thousands to repent of their sins. With these impressions I mounted my horse and moved off for Lynchburg, Va. where the Virginia Conference for the year 1829 was held. I was there received on trial in the class with Bishop D.S. Dogget and 13 others by that venerable and good man Bishop McKendree. Was sent to the Salisbury Circuit including at that time a part of seven counties. The work commenced at Mt. Olive near Mocksville in Davidson County.[2]*

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[1] * Peter Doub papers in the manuscript room of the library of Duke University. Peter Doub tells very little. The writings begin in 1829 and end Dec. 24, 1834. He does a short sketch of his life, notes a few minutes of meetings he has attended, he does not say where, then goes on about sermon notes.

[2] * Miles Foy was a very strict Sabbath observer. One of his granddaughters recalls that he would not let her play with a much prized doll on Sundays--she always held it against him.

MARQUIS LAFAYETTE WOOD
October 23, 1829 - November 25, 1893

Marquis Lafayette Wood loved people and people loved him. And he must have loved Mount Airy.

Dr. Wood--Rutherford College conferred an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree upon him in 1884--was three times in Mount Airy: in 1858-59 when he was twenty-nine and on his second appointment; in 1868 as pastor; and in 1870-74 as presiding elder. Luckily, he kept a diary without which our church history for its first seventy five years or so would have been even more meager, practically non-existent. In his diary Dr. Wood would insert pricless items about the town and its people as well as items of church interest. Dr. Wood was a bachelor when he first came to Mount Airy; he married for the first time from Mount Airy; from Mount Airy he sailed as missionary to China where his wife died; his second wife died in Mount Airy; and he courted from Mount Airy in 1874. His was the first preacher's name which came to Mr. Sparger's (b.1853) mind when the writer interviewed him in 1938. Marquis Wood must have been quite a guy.

Briefly, Dr. Wood was born October 23, 1829 in Randolph County, was ordained in 1857; was missionary to China for ten years; was president of Trinity College for one year (he didn't like it); held appointments for the rest of the time. He died on November 25, 1893 lamenting the fact that "everybody would get an appointment" but him. And, like Asbury, he preached three weeks before his death sitting in a chair.

Here are two interesting and revealing quotations taken from the handwritten obituary found in the "Journal 1890-1893" in Duke University.

"Dr. Wood and wife, in company with Rev. Young J. Allen sailed from New York to China December 17, 1859. They went in no richly furnished modern streamer, but in a sailing vessel. They were seven months on the voyage, rounding the Cape of Good Hope. According to Dr. Allen's statement...The drinking water in the oaken casks got so low that it was black as ink, and the biscuits were mouldy and worm-eaten. They were weeks and weeks when they were out of sight of land and every sight of land and every sign of human existence except themselves. They landed in Shanghai July 13, 1860.

"Dr. Wood was like a father to the younger preachers. He laid broad and deep foundations on which we are now building. He labored and we have entered into the fruits of his labors...His preaching was such as everybody could understand, and his style of expression such that people would remember his sayings and speak of them in after days. Hence it will take the light of judgment day to reveal all the influence of his teaching."

WILLIAM CARTER D.D.
[Merritt Manuscript]

William Carter was upon the Haw River Circuit in 1837. He was a Virginian and a doctor of medicine. He was the first preacher I recollect ever to have seen. When he was on the circuit I was only five years old. It was a hot summer day. I was on a pallet sick. Mother told me that the man standing over me was a preacher and a doctor and that his name was Carter. There was no parsonage in those days and the preacher boarded around. He brought his family, wife, and two or three children, to our house where they remained for two or three weeks. Then they would take their carryall and move to another stopping place. More than a score of years passed and I was thrown with Dr. Carter again. He was not prepossessing in appearance but he was a clever reasoner, and a thoroughly evangelical preacher. He was a strong man. He went back to Virginia where he died at an advanced age.

WILLIAM CLOSS
[Merritt Manuscript]

He was born in Virginia in 1809, entered Conference in 1833 at Petersburg, and died at Enfield, N.C. in 1882, and was buried at Henderson.

He was the stationed preacher of this church in 1835, and again in 1845-46, having served in the ministry for forty nine years--aged 73.

For all these years he served the church faithfully on circuits, stations, and districts. He rose to the diginity of a Doctor of Divinity. He had a vigorous body and a strong intellect. His sermons were clear, pointed and incisive. He had a keen sense of the ridiculous, and keen and ready at repartee, and many are the jokes and incidents that are related of him. He had a peculiar twang or drawl in his voice that gave zest to his droll and witty remarks.

It was at the close of his pastorate in Pittsboro and at this altar that he made the memorable prayer: "O Lord, send this people a preacher that they will like better than they do us." (A hearty amen was heard from the southeast corner of the church.) "and we do humbly beseech thee, O Lord, to send us to a people that we shall like better than we do this people."

His definition of scalawag has been often quoted. In giving evidence before a court he used the word "scalawag", and was asked by the lawyer to define it. The prompt and drawling reply was: "A 'scalawag' is one who says that a negro is as good as he is", (and this with a blurt), "and tells the truth!"

Dr. Closs was fond of coffee, and having passed his cup to be filled for about the fifth time, the lady of the house remarked: "Bro. Closs, you must be fond of coffee." "It would seem so, madam, that I am willing to drink so much water to get a little coffee."

He and his brother Morgan Closs taught school in the Academy between '45 and '50. Morgan fell in love with Miss Lucy McGee (who afterwards married T.M. Jones, D.D.). She lived with her uncle, H.H. Yeargin, where Dick Ramsey now lives. Judge Nash was working in Yeargin's tailor shop, and got the credit of breaking off the match, and "Old Billy", as the boys called him, took up the cudgel for Morgan and accused Nash of lying--brought the matter before the Masonic Lodge. Nash was exonerated and "Old Billy" was furious.

JAMES REID
(Merritt Manuscript)

James Reid was born in Caswell County in 1795; Joined Conference in 1815, and died at Greensboro in 1872....He had a gentle spirit and a musical voice and was greatly loved. His son, Numa F. Reid, D.D., was one of the finest preachers the state has produced. His grandson, Frank L. Reid, D.D., was for years editor of the Raleigh Advocate and president of Greensboro Female College.

"Uncle Jimmy" was a very cautious man -- too cautious to take sides on even very important questions. When serving on a committee at conference on a very knotty trial, he spoke with equal force and earnestness on both sides, wound up with the now proverbial expression, "Let me make a report that is clear and explicit but entirely non-committed." In the dark days of reconstruction he was "non-committed." He was on neither side and yet on both. He accepted the position of Supt. of Public Instruction as a Republican, and thus gave offense to many of his friends. But no doubt he would have accepted the same position as Democrat.

SIDNEY D. BUMPASS
(Merritt Manuscript)

Sidney D. Bumpass was born in Person County in 1808, joined the Conference at Petersburg, Virginia in 1837, died at Salisbury in 1851, and was buried at Greensboro. He was stationed preacher in Pittsboro in 1840-41, and in Raleigh in 1842-43. On both the charges he did most faithful work, and his ministry was particularly successful in Raleigh where he conducted a great revival in which many were converted, and a hundred and fifty joined the Methodist Church during the year. This put Methodism in a high position in the capital of our state. His most

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excellent wife, Mrs. Frances Bumpass, * survived him for many years, and his son, Rev. R.F. Bumpass, is now the presiding elder of the Wilmington District.

Capt. Ramsey gives this incident: "I can never, never forget Sidney D. Bumpass. One Sunday my brother and Cooper Poe went skating. I joined them later. By some means, my blessed mother found it out, and after talking the matter over with me, she advised me to go and see Mr. Bumpass and tell him all about it. I did so. This confession did me good and I was fully impressed with the belief that Mr. Bumpass was a Christian, pure and spotless, and I have never changed my opinion of him."

(The following is from the biography of Rev. H.P. Waugh in manuscript in the Duke University library.)

"I look upon S.D. Bumpass as one of the most holy men I ever knew. While he was presiding elder on the Salisbury district a short time before his death he preached at a camp meeting near Wilkesboro, and speaking of the wickedness of the country he said he saw the devil the night before in the town of Wilkesboro and that he had eyes as big as pewter plate. I don't know that he ever did explain exactly what he meant."

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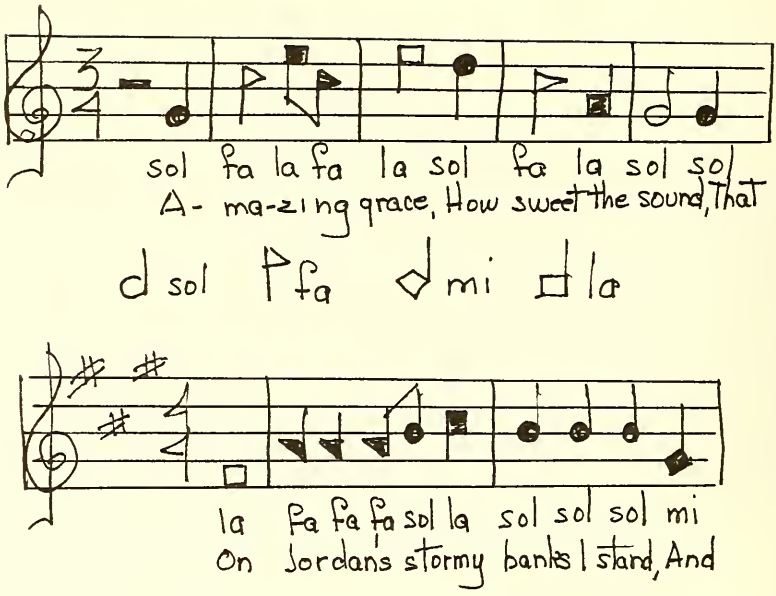
* The Bumpass papers written by Mrs. Bumpass are in the basement of the library of University of North Carolina. They disappointingly skip the period in which he was on this district.

sol fa la fa la sol fa la sol sol
A- ma-zing grace, How sweet the sound, That
d sol f fa d mi d la
la fa fa fa sol la sol sol sol mi
On Jordans stormy banks I stand, And

CONFERENCES, CHURCHES, AND MEETINGS

Not much evidence of Methodism before the 1830's around our section so far has been uncovered. In fact, Methodism in western North Carolina, up until 1780, is extremely vague. What there was of us was part of the Pittsylvania Circuit of the Virginia Conference.[1]* Then in 1780 the Yadkin Circuit which included all of North Carolina west of Guilford was organized. Andrew Yeargin was the first preacher in charge. This was in Asbury's time.

One time Andrew Yeargin was holding a meeting. But let Plyler[2]* tell it: "The preacher closed a warm and moving sermon with a fervent exhortation that led him in the midst of the congregation. In the enthusiasm of the appeal he laid his hand on the head of an old man and said, 'My friend, don't you want to go to heaven?' Whereupon, the stranger with much emphasis replied, 'Man, for God's sake go off and leave me alone; I don't live about here. I come from away up in the mountains.'

Before Lebanon, the first Methodist Church in these parts, was built, in all probability Methodism was nourished in the individual homes of members and in camp meetings. Peter Doub stated that the first camp meeting was held in his father's yard (Forsyth County) in 1802 with Bishop Whatcoat in charge. However, Plyler says that Rev. Mr. Doub was in error--that the camp meeting was held at Rehobeth Church in Lincoln County as early as 1794; but he does add that the first

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[1] * From a manuscript by A.H. Merritt (father or Mr. Cullen, Ed. The late Mrs. Marvin Sparger, etc.) written for the Pittsboro Church. He says that "in the year 1776 the 'Carolina Circuit' was formed. It embraced a region of indefinite extent--all the country south of the Virginia line....is generally considered the date at which Methodism was introduced into North Carolina, but it is quite certain that some work had been done in the state by Methodist preachers previous to this date."

[2] * Plyler, Marion T. and Alva W. "Men of the Burning Heart". Raleigh, 1918

camp meeting was undoubtedly held in western North Carolina.

Be that as it may there is no doubt that camp meetings flourished in the summers all during the 1800's and in some places today. They were part of that period of southern history known as the "Great Religious Revival."

Families liked to camp in the period between cultivation and the gathering of crops time--August was a favorite mnth. Maybe they would come for the day; maybe they would stay for a week or ten days. In any case a shelter was built--a brush arbor in the early days; in the latter a more permanent shelter.

Several sermons a day would be preached by as many different preachers. Religious fervor was in noisy evidence--in singing, in shouting, in "visions," in the "shakes".* People were extremely preoccupied with the subject of death and deathbed scenes were told and retold.

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* The following two stories were favorites which the late Mrs. W.W. Thomas used to tell about meetings at which her father was the "song leader." Her father lived in the Kapps Mill community.

Dinner on the grounds was being served. Two teenaged boys spied a luscious sweet potato pie in one of the covered wagons. Hurriedly stuffing one into each of their bosoms they went into meeting. The preacher then got up with his admonition: "Whosoever hideth his sins in his bosom shall be damned!"

The boys perked up their ears.

"Whosoever hideth his sins in his bosom shall be damned!"

"Now how" the boys wondered, "did that there preacher know that we have these 'tator pies in our shirt fronts?"

The preacher went on to exhort, "Whosoever hideth his sins in his bosom shall be damned!"

"If that man", one of the boys exclaimed, "mentions that 'tator pie again I am just a-goin' to let him have it!"

"Whosoever hideth his sins in his bosom shall be damned!" the preacher thundered.

Whereupon, the boy reached into his shirt bosom, took out that potato pie, slammed it full into the preacher's face and cried, "Now, take it, damn you, and quit talking about it!"

At another time, a Methodist meeting was being held in the front room parlor of a house. Everybody became exhilarated, shouted, sang praises. The lady of the house got beside herself. She flung herself across one of the beds and cried out, "Oh Lord, take me to heaven! Oh Lord, take me to heaven!" Whereupon the husband, tired, weary, flung himself across one of the beds and exclaimed, "Well, we don't have to go tonight, do we?"

At these meetings, too, not only religion was taken care of, but courting, news gathering and dispensing, and general good fellowship. Even our own Rev. [1]
Marquis Wood in May 1858* traveled all the way to Wytheville to attend one. But, after you have finished this account, draw your own conclusions. The latter couple got married but the other couple "didn't take."

"Mount Airy. Friday, 3. At 4 o'clock I, with Miss Charity Prather, Thomas W. Prather, and Miss Rebecca Banner started to a camp meeting in Wythe County. We reached the top of the Blue Ridge up the Fancy Gap about an hour after dark.

"We spent the night with Mr. Mitchell" (Mitchell's Hotel which used to be on the left just before one reaches the Parkway bridge up on Fancy Gap) "who lives on the top of the mountain. Camped by the side of Cripple Creek. Went on to Wytheville-then to Hillsville. Reached home Thursday 9."

Then he went on to describe a camp meeting which was evidently at Salem, 1858. [2]

"Mon. 30. Quarterly conference was held at 8 o'clock. Bro. Avent* preached, [2]
Bro. Barringer* preached at 11, at 3 Bro. Rush at candlelight, Bro. Heflin.

"Tues. 31 Salem. Bro. Wheeler preached at 8 o 'clock. Bro. Reid at 11, Bro. Avent at 3. At candlelight Bro. Heflin.

"Thursday 2. Our camp meeting closed this morning. It resulted in the conversion of about 50 souls--28 white, 3 colored."

Leo Shumaker in his church article of 1958 states that "one of the pastors of that time was the Rev. Henry Tippett (1832 Conference appointee) who did most of his work at the Old Slate Mountain Camp Ground, three miles east of Mount Airy. This ground was in use until the 1840's with Mount Airy citizens Gollihue Moore and Solomon Graves as regular worshipers.

[3]
"The Rev. Peter Doub and the Rev. James Reed* were the other pioneer ministers who attended this camp meeting and conducted others at the crossroads between

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[1]
* Marquis L. Wood diary. Manuscript. Duke University.

[2]
* Conference appointments.

[3]
* Rev. Doub was presiding elder in the Surry district from 1840 to 1843, and again in 1853. Rev. James Reed was presiding elder in 1838 and 1839.

Mount Airy and Laurel Bluff in this community now known as Toast. Other meeting places were at Oak Grove and Salem which today are the locations of strong Methodist churches."

Mr. B.F. Sparger tells about the camp meetings which used to be set up across the road from Salem Church. They lasted from ten days to two weeks; and there, Mr. Sparger said, "town and country used to meet." A "common plank" (?) was set up, beds were fixed, and the floors covered with straw.

Another favorite camp meeting place, Mr. Sparger said, was at the White Sulphur Springs. The preachers stood on the slope just above where the springs are now. (The springs were later moved from their original place to where they are at present.) The persons within daily riding distance spent the day and took dinner. Service was in the afternoon.

The late Mrs. Mag Moore Penn stated that camp meetings used to be held on the old Lebanon Church grounds.

But whereever these camp meetings were held, a "good time was had by all".

PICTURE OF "OLD METHODIST" INCORRECTLY PLACED HERE. SEE PAGE 37.

OLD LEBANON 1830(?)-1860

About all that is known about "Old Lebanon" is that nothing much is known.

About all that is certain is that Lebanon was a church; that it did stand on Lebanon Hill, (North Main Street, Mount Airy), near the vicinity of the water tanks; that it was a part of a circuit; that it was served much of the time by local supply preachers; that it was a frame church - at least in its latter days; (Mr. Shumaker says it was log - it could have been planked over) that it had extensive wooded church grounds; that it served both white and colored; and that it was abandoned around 1860.

"Old Lebanon" was founded probably in the late 1820's and was one of the oldest Methodist Churches in this section.

LEBANON

(Some of the following items about "Old Lebanon" are facts; some are the result of "putting two and two together". The writer is indebted to the late Mr. B.F. Sparger and the late Mr. Joe B. Fulton, both born in 1853, and both possessers of childhood memories of Lebanon, for first hand information.)

About the time of the founding of Lebanon Church on Lebanon Hill, Mount Airy, two denominations were prominent in this section: the Baptists, (derisively called "anabaptists" because they did not believe in infant baptism), who were in
1
the section as early as the 1760's, and the Methodists.* The Quakers, who came in 1772, were concentrated in Westfield. As early as the 1760's the Wachovia Moravians had traveled through this section but had not established a church. These Moravians had mentioned the Baptists in their Journal, but not until 1835 did there seem to be mention of the Methodists.

2
Nov. 11, 1835* "For several years one of our neighbor members, Br. Van Neman Zevelly, has visited from time to time the mountain region of southwest Virginia--about 50 miles from here--in order to distribute tracts and to give spiritual encouragement to the people who are for the most part devoid of religious instruction and only occasionally do they hear a sermon or other spiritual discourse when someone comes into the region. There is no regular school of religious instruction. Brother Zevelly's encouragement and exhortation were generally received with much eagerness and gratitude, and he was each time earnestly entreated to repeat his visits and to persuade other Brethren to visit and to preach to them. (They declared that they did not want anything to do with the Methodists and anabaptists because they were always insisting that one find church membership exclusively in their respective denominations and they reviled each other mutually--wherefore they noticed with astonishment and joy how Br. Z. urged them to give themselves to the Savior and to be built up in His word but in no ways to think that exclusiveness in any one organization in and for itself could help them to persuade them to become Moravians but lovers of the Savior and children of God.)"

Isn't the last a great indictment?

Circuit riders had certainly been busy since the early 1800's but their activities (except for the allusion to Waddill Johnson by Marquis Wood) are obscure.

1
* After diligent search this information by Mr. Shumaker goes unconfirmed: "Methodist archives show ministers of that faith visited the area as early as 1776....One pastor mentioned, the Rev. George Kimball, preached throughout this area as early as 1782.

2
* Fries, Adelaide L. and Rights, Douglas L. Records of the Moravians in North Carolina. State Department of Archives and History. Raleigh, 1954. Vol. 8, p. 4145.

Later the Moravians established in Patrick County on the Wards Gap Road (near Asbury's Elk Spur), three missions which became churches, Crooked Oak, Willow Hill, and Mount Bethel.

LEBANON (continued)

Circuit riders spawned revivals, and revivals spawned the building of churches. There seemed to have broken out in Surry County in the late 1820's and early 30's a rash of Methodist churches, among them Lebanon, New Hope, Rockford, Siloam, and Mount Hermon, a beautiful church in a gorgeous setting which, except for its brick veneer, inside and out could be put back into the nineteenth century. One imagines that Lebanon, on its hill, could have resembled Mount Hermon on its hill.

Just when Lebanon Church was built, nobody really knows. It is generally agreed that Lebanon Church was the first in this immediate vicinity. As of this date, the writer has been unable to find any record of a deed.[1]* Neither has any written reference to Lebanon prior to Marquis Wood's diary of 1858 been discovered. On July 7, 1869 Rev. Wood made this interesting notation: "Mrs. Elizabeth Sawyer died--she was 67 and had been a member of the church for 40 years." Sixty-nine minus forty gives twenty-nine. General opinion for some time has been that Lebanon was founded in the 1820's--so perhaps thirty years was a normal life span of a wooden church.

Does anybody know just who implemented the building of Lebanon? Might it have been Peter Doub who preached on the Yadkin Circuit in 1829, (Bro. M. Foy is but a boy."); who later returned to this section as presiding elder; who traditionally preached near Laurel Bluff where there was a Methodist Church at one time; who was in himself a powerful persuader?

Mr. Shumaker, in his newspaper article, stated that the first church was built of logs--two rooms with a lean to--but this item cannot be verified. Mr. Fulton and Mr. Sparger, substantiated by other Mount Airy residents, agreed that the church was frame. Mr. Fulton remembered having gone there to a revival as a child. Other early Methodist churches of this area were of frame.

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[1]* Two trips to the office of the register of deeds in Dobson, N.C. have been fruitless, although the deed surely must be there. (The writer would welcome any research on the problem.) Nobody seems to know exactly who originally owned the Lebanon tract but it could have been the Moore family whose farm covered the northern part of Burke Development and the Moravian church area and whose farmhouse stood on a bluff at the corner of Grace and Lebanon.

LEBANON (continued)

Lebanon stood in the neighborhood of the present city water tanks. Mrs. Mag Moore Penn was of the opinion that it was built just where the water tanks are; Mr. Fulton, that it was on the north corner of Main and West Poplar; Mr. Sparger was certain that it sat where the Somerville house, (second house on the west side going south from West Poplar) is. Lebanon, so Mr. Sparger stated, sat on four granite pillars, and had one large granite stone for a step. The well was in Mrs. Henry Stewart's garden, and has only recently been filled up.

The grounds were wooded, and included the entire hill and probably what is now known as Burke Development. Mr. Fulton remembered that as a boy he and his brother used to go squirrel hunting with bullets they dug out of trees on the Lebanon Church grounds in what is now Burke Development--the Civil War having used the area as a mustering place. The road went over the hill just as it does now, so Mr. Sparger stated.[1]* The daughter of the late Mrs. J.D. Smith (nee Gilmer) states that her mother had always told her that there had been a cemetery at the foot of the hill on the corner of Main and East Lebanon.[2]* At a later time the flat stretch of Main Street by Burke Woods was said to have been used as a race track!

Not much is known of the Mount Airy of early Lebanon times. It was a small village in a general section known as "The Hollows"--the "hollows" between the "Ridges" and the mountains. Reading between the lines of the conference appointments musters the conclusion that the Lebanon charge must have been unpopular since the preachers often served one year and left. (See list of early appointments.)

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[1] * This statement is supported by other residents, including the late Mrs. Carrie (Sparger) Coone who remembered it as being very rocky and rough, and by Mr. Harvey Hennis who was the first to build a private residence, (1908), on the then wooded hill. The road around the hill was probably built later.

[2] * This could easily have been--old graveyards have a habit of disappearing. The Old Methodist Cemetery which was started in 1857 is the oldest now existing.

LEBANON (continued)

Lebanon was a part of the Surry Charge on the Yadkin Circuit, and had, at one time, twenty-eight appointments! Both Father Needham and Rev. Miles Foy had the distinction of serving this church, the next one on South Main, and were present at the cornerstone laying of old Central on Franklin Street.

Before the demise of Lebanon, Mount Airy, so Mr. Sparger said, had grown into "a small village of about 250 or 300 souls. A large number of these were black since there were several large slave holders living hereabouts. It was, however, a very important link in the High Point--Salem--Wytheville stage route. The road to Danville led by the Old White Sulphur Springs Road."

The most concrete information about Lebanon, which, too, is in Lebanon's last days, comes from the diary of Marquis L. Wood who was stationed on the Surry Charge first in 1858. Rev. M. Wood, in 1858, mentions having preached at these places: Lebanon, Ebenezer, Mount Hermon, Indian Graves, Hollow Springs, New Hope, Flat Shoals, White Plains, Siloam, Rockford, Salem, Oak Grove and Dobson. Salem, Oak Grove, and Dobson were organized in the 1850's. Rev. Mr. Wood seems to have concentrated in Mount Airy and vicinity and "boarded around." These familiar names are among those running through his diary: Pace (Pilot Mountain), Elisha Banner, Edward Banner, William M. Banner, John Banner, Rev. W. Rawley, B.T. Shelton, Gen. Graves, Saunders (Oak Grove), Hugh Gwyn, Richard Gwyn, Patterson (Green Hill), Thomas Prather, Charley Prather, Murphy Allred, Haymore, Murlin Sparger, Brother Needham, Robert Gilmer, Squire Moore, R.R. Galloway, Andrew J. Satterfield (Salem).

Colored people, whom Rev. Wood married and buried, were regular members of the church. It is probable, too, that the sexes were segregated as to sitting, the men on one side and the women on the other, because reliable sources report this still to have been the custom in the "Old Methodist Church" down on South Main.

Lovill's Creek, which was near the foot of Lebanon Hill, and near Squire Moore's place might possibly have been used for baptism when the penitent wished to be immersed. Oak Grove used the Ararat River and Old Hollow Baptist is near Lovill's Creek.

Again reading between the lines, Lebanon, which today would be well within the city limits, must have been considered to have been "out in the country." It is assumed, too, and Mr. Jesse Banner remembers his mother having told this, that the Methodist meetings were held in private houses in the south of town. One gathers that the town was moving southward and that the membership of Lebanon was dwindling while a congregation was being built up in Mount Airy. The first mention of the possibility and progress of building a new church in Mount Airy comes from the 1858-59 diary.

Rev. Mr. Wood must have liked this section. After spending about ten years in China as a missionary, he came back later on two different appointments.

Here are some typical entries from Rev. Mr. Wood's diary:

"Sunday, 7. At 11 o'clock I preached at Lebanon from St. John 11: 20-21. Not many persons out in consequence of the snow. Preached at candle lighting in Mt. Airy from Heb. 4:9. Several persons out.

"Wed. 10. Spent the night with Bro. Jesse Roberts." (This must have been Mr. Sparger's "Righty" Roberts.)

"Went to Mt. Airy in the afternoon. Stopped with Brother Prather. Found Br. Numa F. Reid, our presiding elder, at Prather's.

"Sat. 31. Preached at Oak Grove. After preaching went to Ararat River and baptized 3 persons one by immersion.

"Tues. 6. Preached at Lebanon to nine persons---Spent night with Squire Moore's family.

"Sunday, 2. Preached at Lebanon. Held class meeting and read the "General Rules".

"Sun. 4. Preached at Lebanon at 11 o'clock from Ex. 20 and at Mt. Airy at 4 o'clock.

"Thurs. 11. Quite cold. But seven persons met me at Salem, my appointment. Gave them a short talk from St. John 15:1. People got very cold. Found here a new church, though not completed, but it is, will be, quite respectable.

"Sun. 12. Went to spend the night with Bro. Roberts, a local preacher, living in the country.

"Thurs. 11. Preached at Salem to about 20-25 persons.

"Sun. 5. I preached at Lebanon at 11 o'clock. At 3 o'clock heard a Mr. Chevelier
1
"(?)" Presbyterian.* Preached in Mt. Airy, a good sermon. I preached at 5 o'clock at Lebanon to the colored people, the funeral of a child of color.

1
* From Mr. Shumacker but again unverified:

"An interesting letter reveals that Mount Airy's first Episcopalians met as early as 1852 in the old Lebanon Methodist Church building with Bishop Ives, then head of the North Carolina diocese, presiding over the gatherings.

"An interesting fact about these earliest Episcopal meetings, which were not in a formally organized church, reveals that the sister of Gen. J.E.B. Stuart, famous Confederate cavalry leader, was confirmed by Bishop Ives here." (The Stuarts lived on the White Sulphur Springs Road at one time.)

LEBANON (continued)

"Wed. 4. Bro. Needham baptized six persons for me, four of them were immersed.

"Fri. 10. Preached 11 o'clock at Lebanon. Received two probationers into full fellowship, one white, one colored. Preached in Mt. Airy at night."

A new church "in the place," the "Old Methodist" on South Main Street, was begun in 1858. Be that as it may, Mr. Sparger positively stated, there was no church on Lebanon Hill in 1860. The woods remained for camp meetings, picnics, but the old church had yielded to progress as the population shifted to down town. It is logical to assume that part of Lebanon's congregation went to Salem and part to South Main Methodist Church. Lebanon Hill and East and West Lebanon Streets are all that remain of the name of the first church in Mount Airy, Lebanon.

WHAT IS LEGIBLE ON THE TOMBSTONES IN THE OLD METHODIST CEMTERY

Alley, David (?) ..... B. Aug. 16, 18....
Allred, Eva ..... No date
Allred, James ..... B. Dec. 10, 1878 D. Mar. ?
Allred, Murphy ..... B. July 12, 1816-D. July 12, 1905
Allred, Elizabeth, wife of Murphy ..... B. Oct. 20, 1829-D. Apr. 3, 1901
Allred, Nettie E. ..... B. Apr. 8, 1877-D. May 20, 1885
Allred, Ellen V. ..... B. July 29, 1855-D. July 1857
Allred, Emma, dr. of Albert and Sarah ..... B. Mar. 21, 1874-D. Mar. 12, 1876
Allwood, Sara S. ..... B. 1806-D. 1878
Ashby, Fredrick Byron, son of G.W. and R.V. Ashby ..... B. D. July 31, 1884
Banner, Mary ..... B. July 30, 1838-D. June 24, 1872
Banner, Elisha (ledger-unmarked)
Banner, William ..... B. Oct. 31, 1828-D. Apr. 14, 1889
Banner, J. Howard ..... B. Sept. 21, 1886-D. June 27, 1888
Banner, Virginia, wife of John ..... B. Nov. 28, 1805-D. 1891
Banner, John ..... B. Mar. 21, 1801-D. Aug. 29, 1888
Banner, Enfant, daughter of J.E. and L.E. Banner ..... no date
Bemish, Sue ..... B. Apr. 18, 1832-D. May 25, 1879
Bitting, Joseph ..... tombstone broken
Bitting, Walter ..... B. May 21, 1870
Blackwell, Jane ..... B. Nov. 29, 1825-D. Oct. 18, 1881
Blackwell, J.L. ..... B. Apr. 7, 1811-D. June 11, 1891
Bolt, Roxie, wife of W.A. Bolt ..... B. Oct. 25, 1858-D. May 29, 1882
Brower, Jacob Warren ..... B. Sept. 14, 1812-D. Oct. 14, 1868
Brower, J.W. ..... B. 1877-D. 1879
Brower, J.R. ..... B. 1862-D. 1892
Brower, Emma, dr. of ..... B. 1874-D. 1876
Brower, Mary, wife of J.W. Brower ..... B. Nov. 21, 1822-D. Feb. 6, 1905
Brower, Thomas M. ..... B. Dec. 1, 1847-D. Feb. 1, 1929

TOMBSTONES (continued)

Brown, A.D. ..... B. Jan. 22, 1859-D. Mar. 21, 1895
Davis, Annie D. ..... B. Feb. 28, 1838-D. May 18, 1877
Davis, Elizabeth ..... B. July 1, 1866-D. Nov. 11, 1866
Davis, Nannie ..... B. Aug. 22, 1876-D. Mar. 29, 1900
Denny, Allen ..... B. July 6, 1801-D. May 30, 1878
Denny, Mary, wife of Allen ..... B. Feb. 26, 1812-D. Nov. 29, 1892 Aged 76?
Dunnegan, A.J. ..... D. Feb. 8, 1890
Dunnegan, John .....
Dunnegan, M.J. ..... Age 68-D. Dec. 9, 1890
Durham, ? ..... Aged 84 yrs. 6 mos. 5 da.-D. July 20, 1901
Durham, Henry ..... Aged 66-D. 1869?
Durham, Jane ..... Age 81 yrs. 6 mos. 5 da.-D. July 20, 1901
Fallenstein, Mary G.? ..... B. May 8, 1848-D. Jan. 30, 1881
Foy, Rev. Miles "Minister of the Gospel for 62 yrs."-May 21, 1811-Mar. 10, 1895
Foy, Selena, Wife of Miles ..... B. 1819-D. July 1, 1897
Fulton, Mary, daughter of D.A. Rawley ..... B. May 8, 1884-D. Feb. 6, 1886
Galloway, Helen G. dr. of R.P. and L.A. ..... B. Dec. 23, 1887-D. Jan. 22, 1891
Galloway, Charles W. ..... Aged 25 yrs. 5 mos. 6 da.-D. May 8, 1884
Galloway, James Langeley ? ..... B. 1806-D. 1871
Galloway, Lucie Bell ..... B. Feb. 5, 1877-D. Mar. 27, 1878
Galloway, Mary Kate ..... B. Jan. 8, 1857-D. Oct. 31, 1862
Galloway, Mary Virginia ..... B. Dec. 22, 1835-D. Sept. 23, 1869
Galloway, Robert James ..... B. Mar. 8, 1875-D. June 5, 1876
Galloway, Robert William ..... B. Mar. 10, 1864-D. Oct. 27, 1874
Galloway, Sara ..... B. 1806-D. 1878
Gilmer, Carrie ..... B. Nov. 11, 1863-D. Dec. 29, 1864
Gilmer, Elizabeth Ann ..... B. Sept. 22, 1835-D. Sept. 27, 1898
Gilmer, Frank Spencer ..... B. Dec. 1875-D. Mar. 11, 1878
Gilmer, Gabra L.
Gilmer, James C. ..... B. Jan. 22, 1843-D. Sept. 15, 1878

TOMBSTONES (continued)

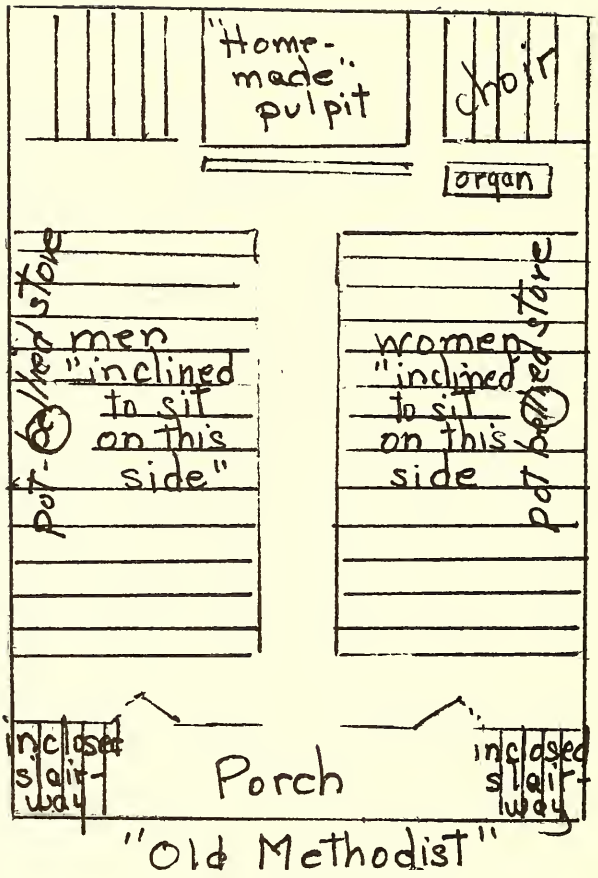
Gilmer, John Clay.....B. Feb. 8, 1828-D. Aug. 30?, 1865
Gilmer, Lizzie.....B. Sept. 30, 1868-D. Apr. 28, 1872
Gilmer, Martha J.....B. Mar. 10, 1833-D. July 14, 1864
Gilmer, Stephen L.....B. July 20, 1870-D. Oct. 22, 1870
Gilmer, Susan A. wife of Robert S.....B. June 3, 1811-D. Jan. 17, 1892
Gilmer, Samuel Frank, Son of S.F.....D. July 7, 1888
Gilmer, R.S.....B. Jan. 28, 1809-D. Mar. 10, 1901
(Could this be Prather?)
Griffith? or Taylor?, son of William and Charity ...B. July 2, 1872-D. Feb. 7, 1890
Gwyn, Mollie, wife of N.D.? Gwyn .....B. 1815-D. 1890
Harrison, sons and daughters (Five children died of diphtheria)
Hill, Mary Caroline dr. of J.S. and ?L. .....B. Mar. 19, 1869-D. July 4, 1870
Hines, Arch .....B. July 8, 1847-D. Aug. 20, 1887
Hollingsworth, Elizabeth .....B. July 1, 1860-D. Nov. 14, 1866
Hollingsworth, John .....B. 1822-D. 1877
Hollingsworth, Joseph Aged 66 yrs. 10 mos. 23 da. .....D. Jan. 20, 1887
Hollingsworth, Mary L.....B. Feb. 5, 1827-D. Nov. 19, 1906
Hollingsworth, Sara, wife of Dr. Edwin .....B. 1815
James, Lula D.? Aged 17 yrs. 10 mos. 22 da.
Lowery, Franklin F. son of ? .....B. 1862
Lowery, Thomas J. Sr.....B. Dec. 18, 1818-D. Nov. 19, 1906
Mitchell, William .....B.18??-D. 1884
Montgomery, James Byron (on Schaub plat).....B. Nov. 7, 1881-D. July 22, 1883
Moore, J.F.....B. Aug. 18, 1828-D. Aug. 15, 1891
Moore, Anna Banner .....B. Feb. 14, 1841-D. Apr. 22, 1930
Moore, Sam D.....B. May 12, 1804-D. May 17, 1866
Moore, Rachel.....B. Nov. 4, 1812-D. May 7, 1898
Owen, Alexander.....B. 1836-D. 1893
Rangeley, James .....B. Oct. 18, 1806-D. Mar. 25, 1871
Rawley, Rev. Wm. .....B. Mar. 15, 1812-D. ? 13, 1881

TOMBSTONES (continued)

Roberts, William M. ..... B. Jan. 1, 1856-D. Aug. 14, 1879
Roberts, Annie ..... B. Sept. 18, 1857-D. May 10, 1858
Satterfield, Emma ..... D. July 29, 1866
Satterfield, Lucinda, dr. of J.D. and M.E. Allred. B. Aug. 22, 1866-D. July 11, 1866
Schaub, Anna D. ..... B. 1792-D. 1875
Schaub, Cornelia Dorothy ..... B. Apr. 9, 1851-D. Feb. 9, 1857
Schaub, Elizabeth ..... B. May 19, 1828-D. July 14, 1914
Schaub, Flora? R. ..... B. Jan. 1, 1855-D. 1857
Schaub, Levie ..... B. 1834-D. 1863
Schaub, Thomas ..... B. Dec. 3, 1818-D. Nov. 11, 1876
Schaub, William Christopher ..... B. Jan. 8, 1859-D. Sept. 16, 1860
Shamel, Anna D. ..... B. 1792-D. 1875
Shouse, William A. ..... B. May 28, 1824-D. Feb. 28, 1893
Smallwood, Sarah M. ..... B. Sept. 30, 1806-D. Sept. 6, 1878
Swift?, Franklin F. ..... B. 1862-D. 1866
Taylor, S.H. ..... B. June 5, 1820-D. Dec. 9, 1892
Taylor, Eliza J., wife of C.H. Taylor ..... B. May 15, 1821-D. May 23, 1900
White ?
White, Eliza J. wife of Geo. P. White ..... B. Apr. 10, 1858-D. Aug. 29, 1895
Unknown ..... B. June 5, 1820-Dec. 9, 1892

"THE OLD METHODIST"
1858(?) - 1894

This is the way the church might have looked.



Floor plan made from verbal descriptions--gallery upstairs on three sides "The two doors made entrance into a space four or five feet wide--an aisle down the center and an aisle down each side." C.B.S.

"OLD METHODIST" (continued)

"Tues. 9. Continued the effort to raise money to build a church with tolerable success. Bro. N.F. Reid preached again at night. People much pleased with their new presiding elder.

"Wed. 10. Raised the subscription for a church to $810."

And.....

"Thurs. Apr. 1. Done a little toward a church in Mt. Airy. The cause moves but slowly."

Then in May....

"Sun. 6. 11 o'clock. Mr. Caldwell preached for me at Lebanon---3 o'clock a.m. Mr. Montgomery preached at Mount Airy after which the sacrament of the Lord's Supper was administered by Mr. Caldwell. They have established a church in the place."

Just when the church was really finished is obscure. The oldest graves are dated 1857. Mr. Wood dates the planning of the church in 1858.[1]* Mr. Sparger stated that the church was finished when Martha Gilmer whose tombstone says 1864 was buried, but he must have been in error as to this point. In 1861 the Civil War started. On April 16, 1862 the first company of soldiers from Mount Airy were about to leave for the war. The following is from a clipping from the UDC scrapbook which is in the local library:

"Appended is a letter brought to the attention of 'The Star' which was written to a publication in Mount Airy early during the Civil War bearing upon presentation of a flag to one of the departing companies to the front. It was dated April 16, 1862 and signed simply 'A Spectator.'

'Today Capt. J.C. Norman's Company, being about to leave for the seat of war were marched up in front of the new Methodist Church to receive a flag prepared for them by the ladies of our village and vicinity."

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[1]* Salem and Oak Grove Churches were organized about this time; Salem in 1857. The Presbyterians organized in 1858 with Mr. and Mrs. Allen Denny, R.S. Gilmer, Margaret Gilmer, Lizzie Gilmer, and Mary Dick as charter members.

Another interesting notation of July 1869: "This afternoon from 130 to 150 persons, men, women and children, passed through Mt. Airy on their way to Utah. They were leaving the (Surry) County. Most of them have joined the Mormons."

In 1868, Rev. Wood also notes that a "Quaker lady preached in town tonight."

So, in 1862, our church saw its sons off to war. The church was built and stood just about where stands the Gilmer Memorial Church.[1]* Some say that the present parking lot covers some of the graves. These graves really did cover the hill back of the church as noted from the indentions in the earth.

Rev. Mr. Wood, who spearheaded the building of the church, went to China as a missionary in 1860 and so evidently did not see to its completion.[2]* During the Civil War the minutes were incomplete.

And before we go on, let us make note of some later observations of Rev. Mr. Wood and others which may throw light upon the early years of the church and its times. The minutes speak for themselves; and may we be thankful to Marquis Lafayette Wood whose diary is the source of most of our knowledge of our early church. All people are different, including preachers. Peter Doub's diary was frustrating in that he wanted to sermonize all through it; Marquis Wood's because he wanted to socialize. These excerpts from Rev. Mr. Wood's diary are made after he had returned from China and was again stationed in Mount Airy.

"Thurs. 9" (1868). "Col. Alspaugh kindly sent me on to Mount Airy. Left Winston a little after 12 o'clock and rode eighteen miles to Mr. N. Dalton's. I do not think I ever had a colder ride."

"Thurs. 17. Held a meeting of my stewards this afternoon.

"Renewed Mrs. J.W. Brower's subscription to the 'Episcopal Methodist'.

"Sat. 11" (July). "Moved to Mrs. Susan Banner's this morning to board. Spent several hours in the afternoon in the church who are making a pulpit and an altar.

"Thurs. 10. Went to the colored people's graveyard near Mt. Airy to bury a little negro boy who died yesterday." (There is an old colored cemetery all covered over with brush on the right of the first underpass just out of town on the Low Gap Road).

"Walter Creasy licensed to preach. (Rev. Mr. Creasy was licensed at Salem. He married into the Murlin Sparger family and became a prominent preacher.)

"Nov. 10. Attended to some business of the church. Dr. Foy preached for me at night. After preaching we had another parsonage meeting.

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[1]* In the 1920's Mrs. Cora Gilmer, then an old woman, built, in spite of raised eyebrows, the present small church used by the Wesleyan Methodists. For some years the lot had stood vacant.

[2]* Rev. Mr. Wood brought back with him from China a Mr. Hazee who is the Chinese ancestor of some of our citizens.

"Sunday, 15. At four o'clock I baptised two colored persons and took those into the church. Dr. Reid preached a fine sermon at night."

"March 25, 1870...This afternoon I attended a public meeting at the church to see about enclosing the graveyard."

"....Married Gen. McNeill and Margaret Fulton, colored, at the parsonage."

The first parsonage, so Mr. Sparger stated, was the Whitman house which stood at the corner of West Wilson and Main. The house was torn down and replaced by a parking lot for the Friends Church.

For a time, Mr. Sparger said, South Main Methodist was on a double circuit with Salem, with Salem being the stronger church. From a manuscript in Duke Library [1] by James Willson* who served Mount Airy in 1876 and 1879, we quote Mr. Willson: "The station then embraced (1873) two main appointments..."

Mr. Sparger is also the source for the item that the first Woman's Missionary Society was started under the pastorate of Rev. Hurley (1886-7).

Mr. J.F. Heitman, (1872-3) must have made an impression because Mr. Sparger mentioned him, and also because he and Rev. Mr. Wood taught a boys' school for a while in 1870, according to Mr. Wood's diary. Of course the Mount Airy church could depend upon four standbys who filled the pulpit now and then, Rev. Needham and Dr. Foy, and two local preachers, "Bro. Roberts" and "Bro. Hicks."

Since the Main Street Methodist was torn down around 1914, and since only two photographs to date have been unearthed, courtesy of Miss Sue Calloway and the late John Hollingsworth, both of which show the church building partly obscured by trees in full leaf, the appearance of the church proper must necessarily come from hearsay. So, too, must come some of the other church items. In spite of some differences of opinion the writer will winnow some of her own which might or might not be entirely accurate.

The new church was a large, two-storied, white-planked church with a recessed porch which had in front two fluted columns. At each end of the porch and flush

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* Also from Mr. Willson: "In 1877 a handsome church was built four miles west of Mount Airy. In 1878 a church four miles northeast of Mt. Airy was added to the station and the fall of the same year another one seven miles west of Mt. Airy. The station has grown into a circuit of six appointments."

with it were two enclosed stairways which led to the balcony. The balcony extended along the two sides and the back, and was reserved for the colored members and the little white charges who evidently considered it such a privilege to sit with their colored nurses that they give prominence to it in their conversations to this day. By the way, there were colored members of the church until 1872.

The steeple was plain, and the old bell which was used there is now, unless recently removed, hanging in the belfry of the Episcopal Church, so Mr. Sparger said. It was said to have had a "sweet tone" and when pulled by its long rope, it tolled not only for church services, but for the many members who were then to lie in the graveyard--a toll for each year of their lives.

Leading up to this big white church which sat rather far back from Main Street was a graveled driveway with hitching posts along the fenced sides, and which was wide enough for carriages. Lining the driveway were aspens--either a species of the cottonwood or a quaking aspen--anyway, old residents spoke of the silver lined leaves "shimmering and shaking in the wind." Around the sides and in the back and rather far down a gentle incline was the graveyard in which the Allreds, the Gilmers, the Banners, the Rev. Mr. Foy and family, the Galloways, the Browers, the Hollingsworths, Rev. Mr. Rawley, the Schaubs, the Bittings, the Davis', the Satterfields, the Lowrys, and others were to lie.

The unpainted sanctuary with its "marbleized" wainscoting was entered from the recessed front porch through two front doors, one for the men and one for the women. (Yes, really.) There was one middle and two side aisles. The benches were plain, wooden pews with high backs--somebody said, maybe slatted. On the right side sat the women; on the left sat the men. The church was heated by two huge, "pot-bellied" stoves which were halfway down the room on either side.

The pulpit was square and "home-made." An altar rail was in the front. On either side of the pulpit were the "amen" corners with the organ on the right, in

front of the choir which sat in the right "amen" corner. The reed organ was "pumped" (all this within the memory of living citizens and so is late "history") by a Mr. Dosher whose son, Albert, played the bass horn and whose daughters, Eva and Linda, sang. The organ was played also at one time by Mr. Herbert Lowery, a son of Tom Lowery, a leading steward. The silver communion set with tankard and two silver goblets, dated 1885, are still to be seen in Central Church.

Often accompanying the organ and choir was the shouting and clapping in time, which, old residents said, was usually in noisy evidence. The Methodists, up until the 1900's when they, like Asbury's McKnight of Clemmons, got "sophisticated", were "shouting Methodists."* Maybe we would do well to catch some of this spirit.

In 1884 we have the first quarterly conference minutes of the Western North Carolina Conference which had just then been formed. They may be read in the Methodist Building at Statesville, N.C. Some excerpts might be interesting:

"July 26, 1884. Record of District Conference--

Mount Airy Station: Mount Airy Station was called. Rev. M.H. Moore, pastor, reported 140 members. Spiritual condition good and improving. One Sunday School of 36 scholars. Average attendance for last two months 73. One weekly prayer meeting and one monthly class meeting. Well attended.

"Assessment plan used for raising fund. About ⅓ of Pastor's and Presiding Elder's salaries paid. Subscriptions taken on all of the conference collections. Assessments on these claims, alone, of $1.12½ per member, and did not expect to raise them in full. $11.75 raised for Church improvement, $18.00 for incidental has a future and the station will prove a success.

(Rev. W.H. Hendren, D.D., P.E.)"

July 15, 1885. 5th session of Statesville Conference, convened in the M.E. Church, South, Catawba, N.C.

Report from Mount Airy Station--Rev. M.H. Moore, B.F. Sparger, J.M. Ashby.

July 17, 1885 (continued) Mount Airy Station pastor's report:

....was called, Rev. M.H. Moore, pastor, reported 157 members, representing 53 families. The station was organized a year and a half ago. The spiritual condition is not discouraging, and, he thinks, improving. Some very pious people; some who are

*One resident remembers Mrs. Brower, grandmother of Mrs. Essie Brower Fawcett, sitting in the congregation beautifully dressed in her "Sunday black silk"; and old Mr. Taylor, grandfather of the well-known Dr. Taylor, sitting in a split-bottomed chair singing at the top of his voice.

Mr. Porter Graves' daughter quotes her father as having said that when a boy he and a friend were sitting behind Mr. Robert Gilmer and his bride who was wearing a huge bustle. The boys fell to wondering just how far a hymn book placed on that bustle would ride without falling off. It carried as far as the new city hall site.

careless. Some trouble with wordly amusements. Attendance upon preaching, the social meetings, and the ordinances of the church go good. A very good Sunday School, numbering 90 scholars. A tolerably good church and parsonage, but not as good as the place ought to have. The financial state of the church is in healthy condition. From $160.00 two years ago, it paid $525.00 of last year for ministerial support, and has paid $100.00 more this year than for the same period last year. The stewards make monthly collections and hold monthly meetings. Bro. J.W. Ashby, delegate, followed in a few remarks as to the difficulty of securing suitable teachers for the Sunday School, and as to the financial improvements."

"July 15, 1886. Rev. R.A. Willis, P.E. Mount Airy Station. Rev. W.H. Townsend, P.C.

"Spiritual condition fair. Attendance at public worship good. Ordinances of the church generally observed. A small class all overfond of wordly amusements, and some are not circumspect in their conduct. Our greatest needs are zeal and activity in church work. We have 140 members. Prayer meetings are not well attended. Sunday School in prosperous condition, has increased from 45 to 75 in number. Number of teachers and scholars 125. We are guided by the discipline in the matter of finances. Paid to P.C. $170, to P.E. $42. Conference claiments, $10. About $20.00 has been raised for other purposes. We have one church and that needs repairing. Parsonage in tolerably good condition. It is rented for $6.00 per month, this revenue is applied to its furniture.

"Bro. G.W. Sparger made some remarks relative to the condition of the station."

"District Conference, July 17th, 1886

"....has a well-prepared (report). We request Bro. Ashby to write his name with a little more care."

Committee on Quarterly Conference

And so on. The church on South Main seems to have been run just like any Methodist Church with its ups and downs. The pastors were human. They were not above painting a rosy picture of their accomplishments. They were a little prone to paint the picture a little dark the first year then, miraculously, the second year under their tutelage, conditions brightened.

Time went on. And then around 1893 the then pastor, Rev. H.M. Blair, and some of the members began to talk up a new church: Following are part of the minutes of 1893:

"Rev. H.M. Hoyle, P.E.

Station Delegates: J.W. Ashby, W.E. Patterson, J.A. Yokley, R.T. Joyce,

"....the building old and very inferior. Value $2.000."

Rev. Mr. Blair not only reported the church building in bad condition but observed also that the town was "like a skillet with the handle down town and the skillet up." So the town was moving north with its inevitable result--a new church.

Rev. Mr. Blair was successful. Some members were enthusiastic; some were displeased. Some went so far as to move their memberships to another denomination.

"OLD METHODIST" (continued)

As if to reinforce the right move the following was inserted into the June 28, copy of the "Yadkin Valley News" which was found in the cornerstone of "old Central."

"The Methodists of Mount Airy have long been in need of a larger and handsomer temple of worship. The old church is small and intensely plain and uncomfortable. Many smaller congregations have neater churches than this one is. A community is judged by its churches, and Mt. Airy has suffered from such judgments, though their justice is not to be questioned. It is with no little pleasure and satisfaction, therefore, that we see the beginning of a church edifice in our midst that will do credit to the thrift of our people and to their hearts and religion. Strangers who visit Mt. Airy will no longer be shocked at the little plain building which has heretofore been pointed out to them as the house of worship of one of the strongest congregations in the state."

It should be said in passing that the Main Street congregation had at one time before 1894 organized a "chapel" down on South Street and that regular services were held there conducted by members of the "Old Methodist."

Also, let us pay tribute to some of those members who had been very active in the later years down at South Main: Rev. J.W. Ashby who was licensed to preach around 1878 and who was "scribe"; J.R. Paddison who ran a very successful Sunday School; Rev. Robert B. Hines, local preacher; Stewards J.A. Yokley, R.T. Joyce, B.F. Sparger, J.H. Sparger, J.H. Prather, T.J. Lowry, Joseph W. Ashby, W.E. Patterson, and others.

And so, Central was begun.

For about twenty years, the building on South Main stood. For several years a Sunday School was maintained there. Some of the older residents remember how they used to go to Sunday School at Central in the mornings and to the "Old Methodist" in the afternoon. The building for a time was used by the newly organized Friends Church; then it passed into private hands. At one time it was sold to W.B. Holcomb, and another to W.R. Hollingsworth for $212. Then around 1914 the church was torn down.

CENTRAL METHODIST CHURCH (up to around 1912)
1894-1966

The town of Mount Airy was growing, and, as in the case of any growing town, the population began to shift. At first there was our 1829 Lebanon in the northern part of town - 'way out in the country. Then came Main Street Methodist, two miles south, the center of a little town beginning to grow. Again came a subtle shift of population, north again but not quite so far. So Central was begun in the central part of town, on the corner of Dixie and Franklin, close by the Pace Boarding House and Squire Pace's Livery Stable where once, it was said, silver had been hidden to keep it from the marauding Yankees.

"In 1892 the Reverend Mr. Blair preached a challenging sermon on the subject, 'Methodism Should Go forward in Mount Airy.' The implication was that it was time for the Methodists to move to a new location and build a greater Methodist church. After much discussion, some revolting, and a good revival the Methodists decided to build in the center of the city on land furnished by J.H. Sparger...The new name of the church was to be Central because it was to be "located in the center of the town, and was to remain in the center of their hearts forever." (Annual Bulletin, 1958)

Came 1894, time for the laying of the cornerstone had arrived. Came the invitation: "To be held tomorrow (Tuesday) morning, June 19th, 1894, at 9 o'clock at the breaking of the ground for the new Methodist Church. Exercises will be held on the lot on Franklin Street. The people of the town are cordially invited to attend

and participate in the exercise!"*

They were there, the members--that is those who weren't miffed--the Masons, the preachers, and, bless their hearts, Rev. Dr. Miles Foy and Rev. Mr. James H. Needham.

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*Several references to the contents of the cornerstone will be made by the writer. This was a quote from one of the papers, The Yadkin Valley News, which was a forerunner of the Mount Airy News and was edited by R.T. Joyce.

Dr. Foy was 83 and was to die the following year; Father Needham, 95, still to live to assist Dr. Boyer in a revival in his ninety-ninth year. This was the third Mount Airy congregation that these grand old men were to honor: Lebanon, Main Street Methodist, Central. Father Needham was to lead in prayer, a ritual in which he was just as much at home as in his own bed; Dr. Foy was to turn a shovelful of earth although it is said that to "Granny" Bray went the honor of turning the first one. There, too, was Dr. Frank Reid, a son of the Rev. Mr. Numa Reid who in turn was the son of the Rev. Mr. James Reid, both early and beloved former pastors of Old Lebanon.

With prayer, responsive readings, scripture, an address by the then presiding elder, Rev. W.R. Barnett, and the raising of the hymns "All Hail the Power" and "Come, O Thou God of Grace, Dwell on this Holy Place," so lively sung, it is said, that the "singing could be heard for a mile," the cornerstone was laid. In it, in an old store tin cake box went a Bible, a copy of the program, a short history of the town by R.T. Joyce, a list of church officers and Sunday School workers, some memorabilia of Odd Fellows' Lodge #107 who duly noted that they had attended in full force, copies of the "Christian Advocate," the "North Carolina Christian Advocate", the "Yadkin Valley News," "Church and Home" - a church paper edited by the Rev. Mr. Blair, all to be opened sixty two years later in varying stages of deterioration.

"The new church", it was noted in the Yadkin Valley News, was to be "one of the handsomest in the state....The main auditorium will hold four hundred and fifty and the annex two hundred and fifty people. The annex is connected with the main auditorium by a folding partition. In addition to these two departments there are also an infants' class room, ladies' parlor, library, and pastor's study. The building will be heated by furnaces in the cellar. It is 85 feet high. There is a front and side entrance. Only the very best brick will be used in its construction. The interior construction and finish will be handsome and attractive. The cost of the church completed will be $12,000 to $15,000. The building committee is composed of Messrs. J.H. Sparger, J.H. Prather, Jos. W. Ashby, T.J. Lowry and J.A. Yokley. The soliciting committee are Messrs. B.F. Sparger, Jos. W. Ashby, J.A. Yokley, and Rev. H.M. Blair."

And handsome it was to be, this brick structure of pseudo-Gothic architecture with its beautiful stained glass windows and towering spire which was to dominate for so many golden years the skyline of this little town. The main auditorium did call for the finest materials; but, according to Mr. B.F. Sparger who told this with a wry smile, and to newspaper accounts, money ran short, and the project was not to be finished until the latter part of 1899.

But work on Central did start. To an architect from Detroit had been intrusted the plans, and to the Messrs. Galloway and Belton the contracting job. Mr. W.B. Shelton did the building at $3.00 per day. Brick was bought from the Short Lumber Yard at $7.00 per thousand. Rev. H.K. Boyer did not see how the congregation could possibly pay for this grand church. And pay for it they did not until later. But they did finish the "annex."

The "annex" was a huge room, 30 by 60 feet. On the west end was the ladies' parlor with its steps leading outside to the Franklin Street side. The congregation at first sat on benches which they improved by paint in 1896.* Eventually, they bought slatted wooden chairs. Here services were held, and Mr. W.G. Sydnor took as his bride Miss Charlotte (Lottie) Banner, Central's first wedding couple, in 1897. Miss Alice Sparger had hoped to have the same distinction when she married Mr. E.H. Kochtitzky in the new sanctuary in 1899 but she missed it by a few months; she became the annex's last bride.

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If the building stayed busy, so did the congregation.

Some of the leading church members of Central's beginning were T.B. McCargo who had to remind the congregation that if they did not pay their building pledges his committee would be embarrassed; J.R. Paddison who was the Sunday School superintendent and to all accounts a good one; Joseph Ashby, the scribe, whom the quarterly conference people admonished to write his name with "a little more care"; G.W. Sparger; B.F. Sparger (my historical source and son of Murlin); A.E. Smith; E.C. Foy (son of Miles); Dr. T.B. Ashby; J.H. Prather; J.L. Ashby; R.T. Joyce; T.J. Lowry (the best press agent Central had - he was editor of the Mount Airy News and hardly a week passed when he did not report on Central); J.A. Yokley; G.O.

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* This and more irrevelant information has been gleaned from back copies of the Mount Airy News which James E. Johnson, editor and publisher of The Mount Airy News, has been gracious enough to let this writer use.

Graves; J.H. Sparger (who belonged to Murlin too); B.Y. Graves; F.M. Poore who was also sexton. There was a Home and Foreign Missionary Society which had parties for the church at the Blue Ridge Inn and on J.H. Prather's spacious lawn, and its sister, The Ladies' Aid, and a Young People's Missionary Society, the forerunner, probably, of the Epworth League.

The congregation was unable to keep all of its shortcomings from its pastors--nor from the News editor who told the whole town and thus provided free advertising.
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On August 8, 1895, Rev. A.P. Tyer reports to the Quarterly Conference:*

"The spiritual condition is improved. It averages fairly with other charges. There is not so much worldliness in the church as around it. I know of but two people who dance and belong to the church. There has been a bad influence in that direction by parties coming to Mount Airy." (You see, White Sulphur Springs was becoming an extremely popular summer resort.) "The people have not the organic force that leads to a brighter life. Have many devoted, but have not the higher spiritual life. Have a good deal of buggy riding on Sunday. No real actual sign of a revival, but am disposed to read this class of literature, rather than books of a religious character...

"Has missionary society, not flourishing, but in a very good condition. Has improved some this year. Has been running on too narrow lines.....

"We have two Sunday Schools and will organize another." School at South Street is doing better work than ever." (It had trouble the next year--maybe folded.) "Main Street Church Sunday School is in good condition. Has model Superintendent." (E.C. Foy) "Will organize a Sunday School at Hamburg.

"J.R. Paddison reports 175 enrolled, average attendance 120. Has better teachers. The young ladies are taking an interest as teachers." (From the Mount Airy News of 1899: "The hour of Sunday School is changed from 4 o'clock to 9:30 to 10:30 (sharp)")

"One Epworth League, partly alive, partly dead, partly born, and partly not born. Hope to have it soon in good condition." (He must have worked on it. It was reorganized in 1896 with R.C. Craven as president; Miss Alice Sparger and W.H. Simpson first and second vice presidents respectively; J.R. Green as secretary; and Miss Annie Armfield as treasurer. They met on week days.)

Mr. T.J. Lowry also did his reporting in the Mount Airy News. He noted that the young people had a birthday party at Mrs. J.R. Paddison's which netted $34.00.

Neither did Mr. Lowry neglect to report on matters of conduct.

"A member of Central Methodist Church requests us to state that he did not get to hear Dr. Barnett's sermon Sunday night on account of certain parties who whispered and 'visited' all the time during the services."

And another: "Rev. Dr. Barnett believes in telling the people of their sins, regardless of the results.

"Rev. Dr. Barnett got after those of us-----

"Along about the latter part of that week we concluded that he was striking at us, and we didn't like it much, especially his reference to a number of his official members going off to hear a political speaking while the meeting was in progress. But Dr. Barnett was right--we were wrong."

And upon attendance:

"Attendance upon prayer meeting hardly average. Ladies ought to attend whether their husbands, fathers, brothers do or not."

Editor Lowry also reported upon Dr. Barnett's sermons against the saloon vote. Dr. Barnett preached against; the vote carried for.

On July 20, 1896 the Rev. Dr. Barnett reports at quarterly conference:

"380 members and one of the Sunday Schools has been organized into a missionary society.....

"report amount assessed for support of the ministry, $1,180, proportion paid to date 33%. Raised by assessment. For other purposes $26. The Board of Stewards is organized and there are two good church buildings--one church building in process of erection."

In 1897 he reports that there is a church attendance of two hundred out of a membership of 391. The Sunday School membership is 150.

In 1898 Rev. H.K. Boyer comments upon the revival with which Father Needham assisted and reports that there were fifty added to the membership. (Father Needham was invited to preach at the church on his one hundredth birthday, declined because of another committment, but died before he could fulfill either.) Rev. Boyer reports difficulties which delay the building of the new church. In 1899 he reports a revival in which there were twenty new converts.

Lest the unsung toilers be passed by let us see about the Sunday School. In 1895 there were nine classes reported. These teachers kept it going: J.R. Paddison (superintendent), Mrs. J.R. Paddison, Mrs. J.M. Fulton, Miss Mollie Price, Miss Annie Mitchell, Miss Josie Case, Mrs. J.W. Nichols, Mrs. M.B. Hines, E.C. Foy, E.G. Gilmer, Jos. W. Ashby, J.H. Prather who later became the much beloved chairman of the Board of Stewards. By 1900 the classes had grown to seventeen. Along the way these teachers were added at different times: Professor Craven, Alice Sparger, Carrie Taylor, John L. Worth, Lizzie Sparger, Carrie Sparger, Mrs. S.N. Allred, Kate Taylor, Professor Minick, Lillie Sides, Maggie Patterson, Mrs. Poole, Kate Burke, Mr. and Mrs. R.T. Joyce.

But what about the church a-building all of these five years? It was finished. In spite of money troubles the congregation somehow came through with a beautiful sanctuary. The builders had done their work.

CENTRAL (continued)

The work was "first class, admired by everybody--interior of this elegant edifice is not only beautifully finished but the work is substantial. Good material has been used and great care throughout. Truly, all can say 'Well done.' "

The editor also announced, after much agonizing over the arrival of the sashes in time for the district conference, that "Central Church begins to look like a house of worship. The memorial windows, and, in fact, all the windows are of modern design and look beautiful. The stained glass with their brilliant colors, add no little to the appearance of the church."

And beautiful they were, these windows. Imported from France, complete with their delicate--not brilliant--colors and the French fleur-de-lis, the two memorial windows flanked by their smaller ones dominated the sanctuary. The tannish east one was dedicated the Rev. Dr. Miles Foy and had already been paid for. Five cent's "and up" were coming in for the bluish north one of Father Needham's. Sadly, another memorial window was up, a circular one on the south side, a memorial to two of Dr. Taylor's daughters, Carrie and Millie, who had died prematurely of typhoid fever within five days of each other. Another circular one dominated the recessed choir loft, one with a gorgeous red Maltese cross, paid for by the lively Epworth League.

The pine woodwork was stained. The ceiling was vaulted, with a large circular light fixture in the middle. Leading to this circle of electric lights were great ornate beams which , so Mr. Claude Shelton said, had been finished on the floor and then hoisted to the ceiling with a winch. To countless restless children like the writer who, sitting with her aunt and cousin while her father and mother and uncle sang in the choir, constantly had to fight a losing battle with the fidgets, these beams probably furnished much food for imagination during long sermons when these beams could be turned into streets, and the elaborate corners into fascinating playhouses. (Meanwhile, her pesky brother and his cronies got to sit on the front pew by themselves while amusing themselves rattling and reading their Sunday School papers.)

The choir loft was recessed--during the third and last remodeling it was restored and enlarged--with a reed organ as the musical instrument. The pulpit furniture was late Victorian and was made up of the pulpit, two red plush chairs, and a red plush "settee." They are still in existence and in private hands.

So went Central Church as do all churches--some good mixed with a little of the not so good. The district conference had met, new Sunday School teachers had been added, the Rev. Mr. J.W. Frank had married Miss Josie Case and both had sailed away to far off Japan on October 12, 1899. The preacher's salary was $750.00 and the sexton's $60.00. But, reported Editor T.J. Lowry, "less than 20% of 330 members paid ⅔ of the pastor's salary while the other 310 paid ⅓. The board of stewards alone paid $450.00." No doubt there is a parallel here to some modern churches.

So enters the twentieth century and the end of this story. But-----

From here the reader is mostly on his own, since many now living remember these incidents, items, and people here mentioned. The time is after 1900 and during the early part of our century.

Around 1906 our church evidently was humming. Here is an excerpt from the Quarterly Conference report of May 21, 1906 on the "General State of the Church."[1]*

"Our church is in the most prosperous state spiritually and materially that it has ever been since its organization. This is the universal opinion of our people. Our revival began on the first day of April. From service to service the interest increased in spirit and power for twenty nine days.

"Almost every night our entire auditorium and Sunday School room were crowded with people who were thrilled with interest in the mighty question of eternal life.

"The people generally have expressed the opinion that they have never before seen such human interest in salvation, nor such a gracious manisfestation of God saving power. There were no less than three hundred and fifty people converted at the altar of prayer. Many were reclaimed and the entire church revived."

J.B. Abernathy was the preacher in charge. Stewards were J.R. Paddison, J.H. Prather, B.F. Sparger, J.T. Massey, E.C. Foy, R.H. Leonard, C.C. Creveling, J.W. Earp, Geo. O. Graves, T.B. McCargo, E.H. Kochtitzky, J.D. Minick, G.W. Sparger.

So enthusiastic were they that in 1906 our Mount Airy congregation was host

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* The writer has not consulted the 1900 files of the Mount Airy News. Neither has she consulted at all the files of the North Carolina Christian Advocate. The "Minutes" notes were taken from the files at Statesville. If anybody is interested in a more exhaustive study of Central these would be excellent sources.

to delegates from the Western North Carolina Conference. The invitation was said to have been extended by A.H. Merritt who mentioned the wonderful cabbage to be found in Mount Airy. The meetings were to be held in the church, the Commercial Club, the Mount Airy Bank, and rooms in the "Grade School." Some of the delegates were housed in the Old Central Hotel, some in the Blue Ridge, some in the Brown House, some in the Pace House. But most were entertained in the private homes, not only of the members but in the homes of members from other churches. Such an occasion was it that some of our church members remember being delegated to three or four to a bed, to the floor, they being children at the time.

At the risk of becoming very tedious the writer will list some of these hospitable people, both members and non-members. This will be a belated thanks to the latter, and the names of the others will perhaps bring back forgotten memories. So here goes.*

Here are some of our host members: Mrs. Kate Banner, Dr. W.S. Taylor, G.B. Cody, W.S. Gentry, A.H. Merritt, John L. Ashby, G.F. Taylor, Mrs. Julia Prather, N.P. Short, J.H. Prather, J.D. Thompson, S.P. Graves, T.B. McCargo, J.A. Snow, E.H. Kochtitzky, R.B. Hines, J.D. McCollum, R.H. Leonard, J.D. Minick, J.W. Schaub, J.R. Paddison, J.S. Worrell, U.L. Robinson, O.H. Kochtitzky, Geo. O. Graves, J.A. Hadley, J.B. Jarrell, Mrs. Cordelia Banner, C.R. Merritt, J.D. Jenkins, A.E. Smith, J.B. Sparger, F.L. Smith, E.B. Ashby, F.M. Poore, J.H. Fulton, R.B. Short, E.C. Foy, P.A. Owens, W.J. Byerly, Jesse F. Prather, Geo. W. Sparger, J.B. Earp, Will Hale, E.F. McKinney, Misses Minnie and Katie Burke, Mrs. Jno. T. Moore, M.C. Reeves, Mrs. A.E. Sides, S.P. Graves, S.M. Hale, J.M. Durham, Mrs. W.S. Creasy, C.F. Taylor, W.H. Long, Mrs. Ida Banner, R.V. Deyerle, Gus Campbell, I.W. Barber.

Now for some of our obliging friends: Harry Galloway, Miss Jennie Bitting, D.L. Hoffman, W.G. Sydnor, W.F. Carter, Mrs. Cora Gilmer, Wm. Simpson, W.W. Burke, Dr. John Banner, Mrs. Thomas Hanes, F.G. Johnson, E.H. Baldridge, C.W. Hodge, Mrs. James M. Hollingsworth, W.L. Steele, Mrs. J.L. Powell, Virgil Holcomb, Geo. Fawcett, J.I. Belton, Rev. C.C. Haymore, Dr. E.W. Allred, James Haymore, Thomas Fawcett, H. Schafer, Prof. Jeff Davis, R.L. Haymore, A. Creed, Mrs. Billy Hollingsworth, W.W. Dobbins, Prof. L.S. Sheppe, S.M. Inman, Mrs. W.A. Bolt.

Since some of the following items are of more or less personal interest to this writer, and since this is mostly her book she will tell the following:

Around 1907, 08, 09 my father, J.D. Minick, had a personable Epworth League which corresponds to our Youth Fellowship. D.V. Price, then preacher in charge,

*Thanks be to my cousin, Dorothy Creveling Robertson, who gave me so very much material preserved by her parents, among them a Conference program from which these names were gleaned, photographs, clippings. Dorothy also accompanied me on many of my trips, copied notes, proof read, etc.

comments in 1907. "The League has only about 25 members, but they are "jewels." They are nearly all faithful attendants at the prayer meeting services, the Sunday School, and the sermons; so that if we could increase the League numbers, we should therefore increase the spirituality of the whole church." Having known my father quite well I know that he did try very hard to infuse the knowledge of the Bible into their minds and set an example for the attendance upon church matters. But--the League broke up. Why? Because they married one another. Will Hale married Minnie Burke; Oscar Yokley married Clara Hale; Claude Shelton married Stella Poore; Bethania Ashby married D.C. Absher; John Foy married Mabel Absher; Rosa Satterfield married Marvin Ellis, etc. What a League! (I was told by Mrs. Minnie Hale that it was they who financed the circular Maltese cross window.)

Since my kin folk were interested in church music and contributed their small talents to the same I naturally have had open ears about the church choir. Replacing the old pump organ in 1912 was a fine new organ. If copious correspondence concerning its purchase which have been preserved is any indication to the care lavished upon its selection it must have been very fine indeed. Claude Shelton states that it was supplied with air from a large bellows which was operated by a water pump which in turn "pushed the bellows up and down." Then the pump dropped back into its cylinder while the water ran out. The piston reached the bottom of a cylinder and tripped a valve that again turned the water back under the piston for another shove up against the bellows and thus up and down until the organist shut off the water." This organ was dedicated on Friday evening, July 12, 1912, by Miss Minnie Haynes and Claude Rogerson, Mus. D., a visiting organist.

Because Miss Briggs Prather was still in college and since Miss Mary Creveling, an accomplished organist, was visiting her sister and brother, the writer's mother and uncle, she was asked to be organist until that time when Briggs would be home from school and could become the regular church organist. According to the Yearly Bulletin, 1958, "Miss Creveling had studied organ in New York City. When she played Bach and Beethoven the 'good saints' were not sure about this young lady's 'learning' for she played what they called theatre music while the stewards took up

collection. But there was one thing sure, the singing Methodists never drowned that organ out again." Miss Prather, incidentally, did become organist until she married and moved away. She was a most beautiful and lovely girl, by all accounts, but she died young.

About the most interesting people, musically and otherwise, were the Woodroffes, an English family of three brothers, mother and sister. The brothers started the granite quarry and the fourth brother was killed there. These brothers were very talented and accomplished musically. They lived in the big white frame house, now an apartment house, across from the First Baptist Church. Here, the huge back music room, they held their "musicals."

In this room, ready to be played by "Mr. George," whose legs were so short that they could barely reach the pedals, was a large pipe organ. Cellos, violas, and violins seemed to abound everywhere. On the walls were pictures of eminent musicians, and on the floor two great big tiger skin rugs with big stuffed heads and gaping mouths with shining teeth were very fascinating to children like myself, who, like my brother and me, were taken to these musicals by our parents. And, incidentally, I might add, he and I never remember being bored. Kaleidoscopes, stereoptic pictures, musical instruments, tiger heads, "Mr. George" with his cello, "Mr. Tom" with his viola, "Mr. Frank" with his violin, and old Mrs. Woodroffe hovering in the background kept grownups as well as children interested. The favorite accompanist of the Woodroffes, I might add too, was my Aunt Mary Creveling who could show off, play her Bach and Beethoven, an dhorse around with the Woodroffe brothers instead of helping my mother attend to my pesky brother and me — her excuse for a prolonged visit down south.

The Woodroffes played in our choir until one Sunday, after they and the choir had worked very hard preparing very special music, the new preacher remarked that since the preacher had to have time to preach he didn't want so much time to be taken up in music, or something to that effect. As a result, the Woodroffes never again played in Central Church. And the old Woodroffe pipe organ is now in the Episcopal Church.

So it was. But before this little history comes to an end let us not forget — the Sunday School picnics at the White Sulphur Springs taken by way of the "dinky" railroad; the little three room house on Dixie which housed the overflowing Sunday School; Mrs. J.R. Paddison and her little "Light Bearers" and her story of the little girl who had a habit of sweeping dirt under a rug but quit — she had become a Christian; the pot-bellied stove which heated the "annex"; Preachers F.H. Townsend, T.E. Winecoff, and the witty D. Vance Price who held so many funerals that when somebody asked why he was asked to hold so many, somebody else replied, "Why, don't you know? He's never lost a case yet!", J.F. Kirk, W.H. Willis who stated (and he must have) "visited every Methodist home in the city, including the homes of about one hundred not identified" and who listed these members in a church register, D.E. Herman.....And don't forget E.H. Kochtitzky, the dedicated Sunday School superintendent of twenty five years, and (to me) Miss Katie Burke, one of the writer's untrained but dedicated childhood Sunday School teachers.

Now it is all yours, old church records, quarterly conference minutes, minutes on file at Statesville, North Carolina, North Carolina Advocates (which I have not consulted) are ready for the looking and consulting. But — what about your own personal reminiscences? Would you forget the camp at Kapps Mill; that dynamic personality Mrs. J.L. Woltz; Will Hale and his Junior Department; Jesse Banner and his counting of Sunday School money; Rhoten Hines, the White Christmas Santa Claus; Mrs. Calvin Graves' inimitable Mission Study Class; the good natured laughter of Mrs. A.B. Somerville; Mrs. J.D. Jenkins who sang soprano so long in the church choir; organists Margaret Ashby Sparger, Nell Folger Glenn, Leslie Rothrock Curry, Dorothy Creveling Robertson; (for me and my brother, the ever welcomed and looked for monthly stewards' meeting when our daddy went to take the minutes and we did not have to "say lessons"); the long treasurer's tenure of C.C. Creveling; Mr. Geo. O. Graves' handshake; Mr. Oscar Yokley, for so long the chairman of the Board of Stewards; returned missionaries Rev. and Mrs. J.W. Frank; Mr. and Mrs. J.R. Paddison's Christ in Gethsemane window; Mr. J.H. Folger's Baracca Class; the scattered Sunday School classes in the main auditorium (sanctuary) with J.D. Minick's Bible Class in the amen corner; the Culpepper and Tom P. Jimison revivals with their mourners' bench reinforced with the background music of "Rescue the Perishing", "Almost Persuaded," and "Just As I Am". Just remember your own.

Do not let your children be among those who remark in later life, "Now, if only I had asked my father (mother) before he (she) died!" Write down those tidbits here, now, right in this book. Perhaps this list of pastors can jog your memories.

1900-1901 - Zadok Paris
1902-1903 - F.L. Townsend
1904- - T.E. Winecoff
1905-1906 - J.E. Abernethy
1907-1908 - D. Vance Price
1909-1910 - John F. Kirk
1911-1914 - W.H. Willis
1915-1918 - George D. Herman
1919-1920 - Walter B. West
1921-1924 - H.K. Boyer
1925-1926 - W.A. Newell
1926- - R.H. Daugherty
1928- - A.C. Gibbs
1929-1931 - C.S. Kirkpatrick
1932-1935 - J. Thomas Mangum
1936- - M. Turner Smathers
1937-1941 - Walter J. Miller
1942-1946 - C. Newton Clark
1947-1948 - Frank B. Jordan
1949-1953 - A.C. Waggoner
1954-1956 - Walter L. Lanier
1957-1960 - Earl H. Brendall
1961-1964 - Frank C. Smathers
1965-1968 - D. Edwin Bailey
1969-1970 - Horace C. McSwain
1971-1974 - Robert O. Ralls
1974- - Roger W. Tucker

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